THE UK'S BIGGEST REGIONAL GAY LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

ZONE

MIDLANDS EDITION

ISSUE 239 **MARCH 2017**

BIRMINGHAM PRIDE
Jonas Blue, Saara Aalto, M.O, Basement Jaxx and many more announced!

REVEALED!

OUT
THE ESSENTIAL NIGHTLIFE + CLUBBING GUIDE

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La Cage AUX FOLLES

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INTERVIEW INSIDE: JOHN PARTRIDGE
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I am what

We chat to John Partridge about his starring role in the touring production of hit musical La Cage aux Folles which lands in Birmingham's Gay Village in May!

La Cage aux Folles is coming to Birmingham on its first ever tour of the UK. Presented by Bill Kenwright, the lavish new production of the award-winning musical extravaganza stars John Partridge as Albin/Zaza, Adrian Zmed as Georges and Marti Webb as Jacqueline.

Georges and his long-term husband Albin, a dazzling drag artiste who stars as Zaza in the infamous La Cage aux Folles nightclub, live a vibrant life in the heart of St Tropez. However, when Georges' son announces his engagement to the daughter of a right-wing homophobic politician who's determined to close down the colourful venue, Georges and Albin are forced to hide who they really are...

Zone caught up with EastEnders and West End star John Partridge to talk about the real message behind the story of the show, his lengthy preparation before stepping out on stage, and his ongoing love affair with the city of Brum.

You've starred in La Cage aux Folles since early January, John. How's it been going, and what has the audience reaction been like?

It's been going fantastically. Even though it's never toured before, we've had the most amazing response to the show, and it just feels so wonderful.

How would you summarise the story of the show?

La Cage is all about hard-won freedoms in the face of conservatism.

With the current rise of right-wing conservatism and extremism in both Europe and the United States, do you think the story of La Cage is particularly relevant right now? There's quite a strong comparison to be made between Anne's father in the show - a right-wing politician - and Donald Trump.

Yes, it's definitely very topical. The story of La Cage is just as relevant now as when it was first performed on Broadway in the 1980s, if not more so. We haven't had one show where there hasn't been a standing ovation, and that's because they're applauding the message and the essence of the show. That's why it's just so heart-warming for us.

What would you say the true message of the show is?

That you can be whoever you want to be, no matter what race, religion or sexuality you are. We all have to learn to accept, celebrate, acknowledge and

I am!

... and what I am needs no excuses!

respect each other's differences. We need to realise that we're all individuals living together, so we have to get along.

Why should people, especially LGBTs, come and see the show?

Everyone should come and see it because it will remind them what life is about. Life is a beautiful thing, and we can all be different within it. You are who you are, so be proud of that.

What's it like singing the iconic song, I Am What I Am?

For an actor like me, getting to stand up on stage and share that moment with the audience is completely life-affirming, and the response I've had has been absolutely wonderful.

There must be quite a lot of preparation involved for your role as a drag queen. What's it like playing Albin/Zaza?

It's exhausting, for want of a better word! I have to get to the theatre a good two hours before the show starts, to start putting on my makeup. After a song called A Little More Mascara, I transform from a man into a woman, which is all done by illusion because I already have all of the makeup on from the start. I just unveil myself more and more as the show goes on. I have to shave everywhere because, as a lady, you can't have any of the unwanted hair that seems to be all over my body. This is a real female illusion, so I have three pairs of tights, spanks, padding and gaffer tape for tucking. In the first half alone, I have 14 costume changes, some of which are only 90 seconds long. The costumes are completely out of this world - it's such an opulent and fabulous show.

> We all have to learn to accept, celebrate, acknowledge and respect each other's differences

Images courtesy of Pamela Raith Photography

Have you always been a fan of La Cage?

I first saw it in 1987 at the London Palladium, when I was 14. It became the soundtrack to my youth. I never thought in a million years that I'd be able to be a part of this wonderful show. It's an honour to sing these songs and bring this show to life. When we take the production to Wimbledon, 10 of the original cast members are coming to watch us, which is just wonderful. It feels like a real La Cage aux Folles family, and it's great to be a part of that.

You did a lot of musical theatre before you starred as Christian in EastEnders. Does it feel good to really be getting back into it?

Yes, it's all about progression for me. It's about learning and continuing to grow and develop as an actor, whether that be on television, in musical theatre, performing in a one-man band, singing in concerts or through any other medium within the arts. Right now I'm learning a lot about being a lady! That's not something I ever thought I'd say.

Do you have a preference when it comes to performing on television or in the theatre?

They're very different. With theatre you get an instant reaction from an audience, so you know straight away whether or not they're enjoying it. There's nothing better than holding an audience in the palm of your hand and being able to hear a pin drop followed by an applause. It's an instant buzz. Television is different because you're not necessarily sure how it's going to be received. Sometimes you have to wait as long as eight months before you even see it. But I like and respect both platforms and mediums.

Musical theatre must get pretty exhausting - you're doing up to eight shows a week for months on end. How do you make each show as exciting as the first?

You have to be disciplined. It's very tiring to give your all that many times a week, but your training and professionalism guide you through. I trained at the Royal Ballet School from the age of nine to 16, and that training really helps. You also have to work a little bit harder for some audiences because they vary from city to city. You have to adjust your performance to fit different venues and cultures.

You've performed in Birmingham a number of times, in Cats, Miss Saigon and panto. What's the Birmingham audience like?

It's always great - warm and very much 'up for it'. I absolutely can't wait to get Zaza into the Hippodrome and have some fun with the Brummie crowd because I know they'll be really receptive to it.

You were also in Birmingham over Christmas, performing in Chicago. How do the roles differ?

They're very different shows, but in some ways they aren't that dissimilar. Billy Flynn and Zaza are both showmen - or rather one's a showman, the other a showgirl. Billy is quite the consummate showman, so I'm sure if anyone could give Zaza a run for her money it would be him. In fact, I think they're a match made in heaven. Zaza Flynn... Who knows?

Are you looking forward to coming back to Birmingham with La Cage in May?

Yes, I love being in the city. I'm from the North West, so it's close enough to my home that I get to see my family and my mum, who's suffering with dementia. I have lots of friends in and around Birmingham now too, so it's great that I can catch up with them - although with eight shows a week, I barely get any time off. I love starring in the Hippodrome because it's a great venue to play. It's a beautiful theatre, so I'm really looking forward to getting back and performing there again.

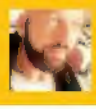
Interview by Lauren Cox

La Cage aux Folles shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 16 to Saturday 20 May.

Tickets and info:
birminghamhippodrome.com

REVIEW: John Partridge pulls off a ★★★★★ performance!

by Martin Monahan



As the lead song in this show goes, 'life's not worth a damn till you can shout out I am what I am'. This important message of acceptance sits at the very heart of this latest version of La Cage aux Folles, a musical which, in all its fab-u-lous camp glory, doesn't disappoint.

You could ponder whether this show is as relevant today as when it first stormed Broadway back in the early 1980s, winning countless prestigious awards.

Well, in this strange new world in which we find ourselves - facing right-wing extremism across Europe and religious fundamentalists campaigning in America to repeal some of those hard-fought LGBT equality rights - this lavish new production couldn't be more relevant if it tried.

Yes, okay, we've got gay marriage in the UK (well, except Northern Ireland, of course), equal LGBT adoption rights and so on - and yes, we've even got Grindr! - but judging by the euphoric standing ovation afforded this spangly new version of La Cage, its audience is in no doubt whatsoever about the show's modern-day relevance.

Relevant it most certainly is - and resoundingly so.

Don't be put off by the show's French title. If you've ever seen the Robin Williams film The Birdcage, La Cage is essentially a camp, musical version of that. Perhaps think 'Moulin Rouge meets Danny La Rue' and you'll get the idea.

The cast, costumes and set are all fabulous. Adrian Zmed as Albin's husband Georges, Dougie Carter as Georges' son Jean-Michele and Marti Webb as restauranteur Jacqueline - together with Samson Ajewole as the camp butler (or is he the maid?) - all deliver super-duper performances.

But the real shining light of the show is John Partridge, who pulls off an incredible five-star performance. His portrayal of Albin is outstanding. He certainly makes the role completely his own - he's bold, camp, brash and, surprisingly, very, very northern!

> ***"...this lavish new production is simply a must-see!"***

Partridge's 'stand-up' segment in the show is hilarious; his off-the-cuff ad-libs have the audience in stitches. And his heartfelt rendition of I Am What I Am, a song that's become a truly legendary gay anthem, is absolutely spellbinding and performed with huge emotion.

The plot is simple. La Cage aux Folles, a drag cabaret club on the French Riviera, is run by Georges and his partner Albin, who's the star of their cabaret show in the guise of his alter-ego Zaza. Georges' son Jean Michele announces he's getting married and has invited his girlfriend and future in-laws for dinner. But his future father-in-law is a homophobic right-wing politician who's set on shutting down 'immoral' drag and gay clubs. Not wanting to upset the apple cart for Jean Michele, Georges and Albin try and hide the truth about their lives - with hilarious results!

So if you know and love La Cage, this lavish new Bill Kenwright production is simply a must-see.

If you aren't familiar with the show, then 'bang your own drum and see things from a different angle' by getting a ticket now! You'll have a night filled with laughter, heart-break and all the camp, glitzy, drag flamboyance that La Cage aux Folles delivers in glorious abundance.

Birmingham Pride 2017: Basement Jaxx in first wave of artists announced for festival

Organisers of Birmingham Pride have announced that '90s electronic music duo and Oh My Gosh hitmakers Basement Jaxx will perform an exclusive DJ set at this year's two-day LGBT festival.

The duo will be joined by DJ and producer Jonas Blue, whose single Perfect Strangers rose to number two in the charts. Not In Love girl group M.O and Finnish X Factor runner-up Saara Aalto will also perform.

This year taking place for the 21st time (over the Spring bank holiday weekend of Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 May), Birmingham Pride is the UK's largest two-day gay festival, last year attracting more than 50,000 party revellers.

Pride's Festival Director, **Lawrence Barton**, commented: "There's such a buzz in the air already for this year's Birmingham Pride! We're delighted to be adopting the theme Love & Pride, recognising and celebrating the 50th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality - a monumental occasion for the LGBT community.

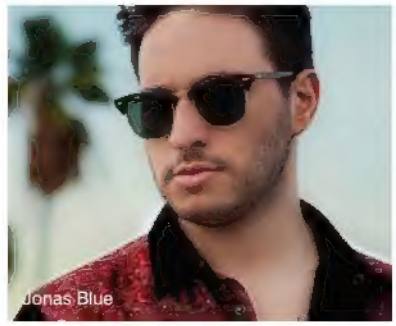
"Every year we bring you the biggest and best artist line-up, and 2017 is no different."

Each week, Pride organisers will be revealing more artists for the main stage, cabaret marquee and dance arena. The announcements will be made exclusively on the festival's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Barton added: "We've already announced the legendary Basement Jaxx, the lovely Jonas Blue and hot girl group M.O to perform. And the feedback has been particularly great about X Factor runner-up Saara Aalto!"

As well as the aforementioned main stage,

Basement Jaxx


Jonas Blue

M.O

Saara Aalto

And Pride 2017's attractions also include a funfair, a women's arena and a host of community stalls.

This year's carnival parade sets off from Victoria Square at midday on Saturday 27 May. As with the festival itself, it will be taking the theme of Love & Pride.

Advance Discounted Tickets for the festival, which takes place in Birmingham's Gay Village, are available online from www.birminghampride.com.

#LoveAndPride

Popular Brum drag queen hoping for RuPaul success

Thirteen contestants, one of whom is a big favourite on the Midlands gay scene, have been announced for Season Nine of RuPaul's Drag Race.

Competitors in the hugely popular drag talent show include London's Charlie Hides, who regularly performs at Birmingham's Eden Bar, and Trinity Taylor, who won the Miss Pulse 2011 title at the Orlando nightclub in Florida.

The other contestants are Meet Aja, Alexis Michelle, Eureka, Farrah Moan, Jaymes Mansfield, Kimora Blac, Nina Bo'Nina Brown, Peppermint, Sasha Velour, Shea Couleé and Valentina.

The show makes a welcome return later in the year.

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Prince William nominated as Celebrity Straight Ally Of The Year at British LGBT Awards

Prince William has been nominated for a British LGBT Award.

The heir to the throne was nominated in the Celebrity Straight Ally Of The Year category after speaking out against homophobic bullying.

The 2017 awards, dubbed the 'gay Oscars', take place on Friday 12 May.

Sarah Garret MBE, founder of the awards, said: "The 2017 NatWest British LGBT Awards shortlist features inspirational people who've used and continue to use their platform to promote and enhance LGBT rights all over the world.

"All nominees are absolutely deserving of their place on the shortlist, but it's now down to the public to choose their winners ahead of the ceremony, which is set to be the biggest yet when it takes place in London on Friday 12 May."

Prince William has some tough competition this year, with James Corden, Ariana Grande, JK Rowling and Emma Watson among the other nominees for the award.

Other award categories include: Celebrity Rising Star; Broadcaster or Journalist of the Year; LGBT Celebrity of the Year; Music Artist of the Year; and Media Moment.

The awards ceremony is also set to pay tribute to pop legend George Michael, who died on Christmas Day last year.

Lady Gaga to visit Birmingham with her 'Joanne' World Tour

Pop superstar Lady Gaga has announced that she will be performing in the Midlands as part of her global Joanne tour.

The Born This Way singer, who recently performed at the 51st NFL Superbowl half-time show, visits Birmingham's Barclaycard Arena on Sunday 15 October.

Visit barclaycardarena.co.uk for information about ticket availability.

Happy couple to receive marriage blessing at Coventry Pride festival

Coventry Pride will this year celebrate the life journey of Haley Bridge and Claire Haines, with the couple receiving a blessing on their marriage on the event's main stage.

Local ladies Haley and Claire are scheduled to be married during Pride 2017, and the festival's organisers are allowing the city's LGBT-plus community to share in the couple's happiness.

At 4pm on Sunday 11 June, Haley and Claire will be invited onto the main stage, located in University Square outside the iconic Coventry Cathedral.

Commenting on the news, Pride organisers said: "Haley and Claire's marriage is a beautiful result of the recently passed Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act. Allowing an individual to marry the one they love is another step towards full, proper equality for LGBT-plus people. Despite there being a lot more work to do, we're delighted to be able to share in a moment of joy, at the same time looking at what we've all achieved to get to where we are today."

Coventry Pride takes place on Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 June.
Visit coventrypride.org.uk or follow @PrideCov on Twitter and Facebook for more information.

Pam Ann back in the Midlands for 20th anniversary tour

Queen of the skies Pam Ann is set to land in Birmingham this May with her Touch Trolley Run To Galley 20th anniversary tour.

The international celebrity airhostess is the alter-ego of Australian comedian, writer and producer Caroline Reid. Reid has developed cult status within the gay community with her portrayal of the 'brash hot mess of an Australian hostess'.

Pam Ann checks in at Birmingham's Town Hall on Wednesday 31 May. Tickets for her show are now on sale.

Nick Hynan
Photography

Birmingham-based photographer Nick Hynan has worked with the LGBT community for many years. He brings a unique visual style and insight to his work with individuals and organisations across the region.

Search: Nick Hynan Photography
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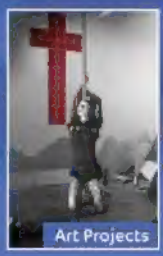

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celts sauna

Celts Narborough Road Sauna Clinic:
Day: Saturday 4th March
Time: 11am - 1.30pm
Place: 38 Narborough Road, Leicester, LE3 0BQ

City Celts Sauna Clinic:
Day: Mondays | Time: 4pm - 7pm
Day: Wednesdays | Time: 3pm - 5pm
Place: 33 New Bond Street, Leicester, LE1 4RQ

Splash Spa & Leisure

Day: Thursdays
Time: 3pm - 6pm
Place: 61 Bedford Street, Leicester, LE1 3JR

TRADE

You can also check out Trade Sexual Health:

www.tradesexualhealth.com

Trade in Leicester move on to next stage of Sexuality, Gender Identity And Belief project

The next stage of Trade Sexual Health's Sexuality, Gender Identity And Belief project features a series of shared conversations between faith communities and their leaders, LGBT communities and LGBT people of faith.

The aim of these shared conversations is to bring people together to further discuss some of the themes that emerged during the break-out sessions at the project s launch event.

The conversations will also include discussions about how best to shape the local 'LGBT people of faith communities toolkit', which Trade hopes to have created and launched by the end of August.

The dates and times of each of the shared conversations is as follows: Thursday 9 March, 3-5pm, Leicester Adult Education College; Thursday 16 March, 3-5pm, Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre; Saturday 25 March, 11am-1pm, Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre; Thursday 6 April, 6-8pm, Leicester Adult Education College.

The same themes and topics will be discussed at each shared conversation session, so there's no need to attend more than one. Places for each get-together are limited, so booking is essential. You can secure your place by contacting mak.nder@tradesexualhealth.com.
All of this information is also available on the project homepage: bit.ly/SGIBLeicester

First ever National Lesbian & Bisexual Women's Health Week taking place this month

The National LGB&T Partnership is launching the first National Lesbian & Bisexual Women's Health Week, running from 13 to 17 March.
The aim of the week is to raise awareness about women's health inequalities and more. For further information, contact Andrea Willinger at Birmingham LGBT on 0121 643 0821, or email her at andreawillinger@blgbt.org

Birmingham LGBT to celebrate International Women's Day

Midlands charity Birmingham LGBT will be celebrating International Women s Day (IWD) on Wednesday 8 March.

A globally recognised day, IWD celebrates the social, economic cultural and political achievements of women. It also acts as a 'call to action' for gender equality.

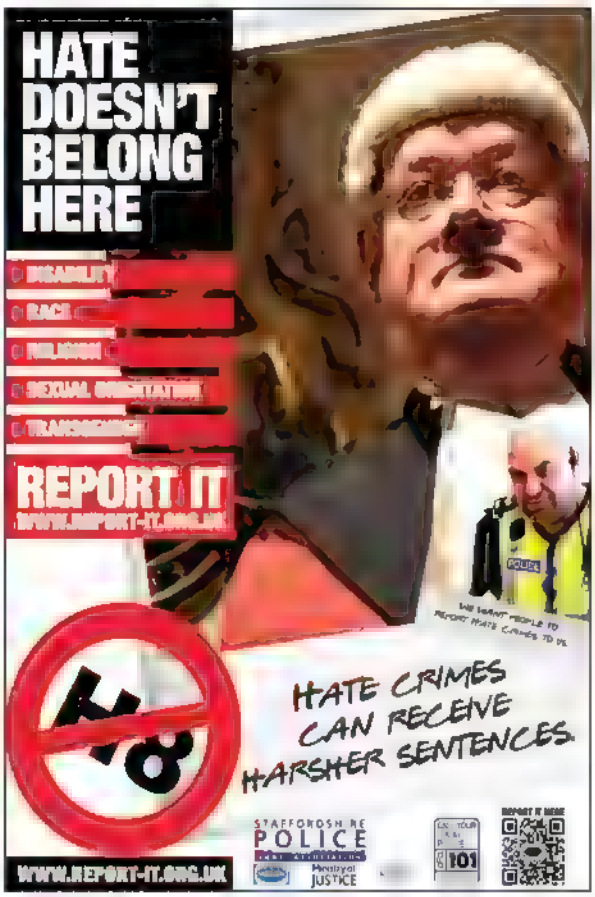
This year's theme is Boldness, with the event s organisers 'calling on the masses' to help forge 'a better working and more gender-inclusive world'.

"Each one of us," says the International Women's Day campaign, "with women, men and non-binary people joining forces, can be a leader within our own spheres of influence by taking bold, pragmatic action to accelerate gender parity.

"Through purposeful collaboration, we can help women advance and unleash the limitless potential offered to economies the world over.

"We have urgent work to do. Are you ready to #BeBoldForChange this IWD and beyond?"

To find out how you can get involved, check out internationalwomensday.com or visit blgbt.org.



Lisa Wilson

DJ & Barmaid
The Fox Bar, Birmingham

Born: Birmingham
Star sign: Cancer
Age: 33

"When you first come out and see all those like-minded people in one place, that's pretty mind-blowing"

About Lisa

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Birmingham. Stetchford and Kingstanding for my teenage years.

Single or attached?

I've been attached for nine years!

Would you consider getting married?

Yes I would. I've already planned the wedding in my head. I just need to rob a bank to pay for it! If I'm going to do it, I want to do it in style. I want the fairytale...

What makes you happy?

Seeing my nearest and dearest happy is what's most important. Naturally music is life. Well, it's mine anyway. I love music because it evokes memories. I love how, when I hear a song, it takes me right back to a moment in time. And I love how songs can make me feel physically and emotionally. Music really is a powerful tool!

What makes you sad?

Seeing my family or friends hurting and not being able to help them or make it better.

What makes you angry?

Stupid-people jokes. Fake people, politics and bad drivers. I hate being ignored or being hung up on. That's a really big thing for me, it just makes me see red. I mean, how rude!

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

To not have anxiety. I've had it for most of my adult life. It's under control, but at the same time it has a hold and I'm aware that it's there. These things can take over your life, but I'd like to think I'm a strong person, so I have to fight it, otherwise it would take control. I want to live my life, so we learn to rub along together.

What's been the most embarrassing thing you've done in your life?

Probably when I used to use buses. I was running for the bus and slipped over, Superman style! The bus driver actually slowed down to watch it happen! Needless to say, I didn't catch that bus!

Coming Out

When did you first know you were gay?

Probably when I was about eight years old. I started to like my girlfriends at school. I even kissed one, but it didn't click back then. Then, as I got into my teens, it became more prevalent. I experimented with both, but I honestly didn't think at that age that I knew what I wanted. All I knew was that I liked boys and girls the same.

When did you come out?

When I was 18.

What was school like for you as a gay teenager?

I guess it was okay because nobody knew. I had a boyfriend at school and a girlfriend at home. Nobody at school ever mentioned being gay, and nobody talked about it either, so I didn't make a big deal of it - I just carried on but still kept it secret. If I were at school today, I would been more open. We've become more accepting now and it's so normal. I bet nobody even bats an eyelid anymore. Times change, and so do people's attitudes.

Who was the first person you told you were gay, and what was their reaction?

My best friend, Jo. She was fine with it - and she turned out to be gay too. What are the chances of that?! Our other friend, however, didn't take so kindly to it. That friendship ended pretty quickly.

What would you say to a youngster trying to come to terms with their own sexuality?

Well, I guess it's easier to accept nowadays. When I was at school it was still taboo, so nobody ever talked about it. I guess I'd say, just be yourself, talk to someone about it and remember, it's not weird, it's normal! Don't let anyone tell you any different. Try not to label yourself, just be you. I actually don't like labels, but I guess people like to put you into boxes so that it's easier for them to understand.

Have you ever had any experiences with the opposite sex?

Yes, a few actually, when I was still on the fence or just unsure. I guess I tried both to see how I felt. I soon realised the opposite sex wasn't for me. It just didn't feel normal to me. I felt most comfortable around girls. Plus, my life, my friends and my work all revolve around the gay scene. I can't ever see me changing and going up Straight Street in that way.

Your Career

When you were younger, what did you want to be?

An archaeologist. I loved Indiana Jones and history! Then the Tomb Raider games came out, so I wanted to be like Lara Croft. My next big thing was dancing. I love to dance, and I always wanted to be one of those backing dancers you see on stage with Madonna, my idol.

What was your first job when you left school?

I worked at Greggs. They were the best years of my life - free cakes and food! What's not to love?! If I'd stayed there, I would've been the size of a house by now.

What's your role at The Fox Bar in Birmingham?

I'm a DJ and barmaid. I've actually worked there now and again

for over 12 years! DJing is the new thing for me. I've always wanted to try it, and I was lucky that the boss, Andy King, gave me that opportunity!

What are the challenges in your job?

Drunk customers! Need I say more?

What are the highlights?

Seeing everyone happy and dancing to my music makes me happy. I'm a people-watcher, so the booth gives me the best view. Seeing everyone sing a song together always makes me smile.

How does your role help the local LGBT community?

I'm not sure that it helps, but I guess it gives people peace of mind that they can be comfortable in our venue without being judged, since we're all the same.

Where do you see yourself in five years' time?

Probably still at The Fox, spinning my decks - if Andy keeps me on, that is! I'll also be looking at selling up my flat and my partner's and buying a house together. Then children - something I never considered before, but as I've got older, I've realised what's important for my future. And as all my friends are having children, it's a natural next step.

Gay Scene

How long have you been frequenting the Midlands gay scene?

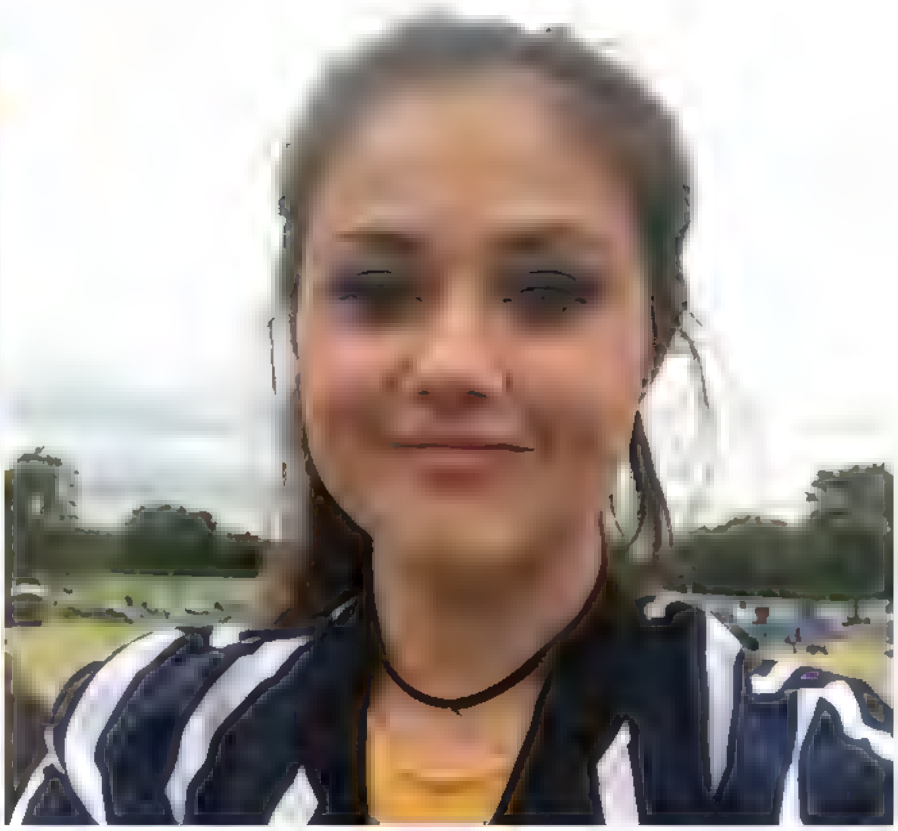
Since I was 18, so 15 years in total. Wow! Where has the time gone?!

What's been your fondest memory of the gay scene?

I have way too many favourites to pick. I guess my first Pride would be up there. When you first come out and see all those like-minded people in one place, that's pretty mind-blowing. I'd never seen anything like it before. I was mesmerised.

Who's your favourite cabaret act on the gay scene?

I've got to say Lewis! He's so different to the other acts. He appeals to a wider range of people and I feel he's so current.



Who's your favourite person on the scene?

Andrew King, of course!

What do you most enjoy about the scene?

We're like a little family. You feel safe and it just feels like home, I guess. I like that we can go there and be ourselves.

What have you noticed about the way the gay scene has changed over the years?

I've noticed that more and more straight people spend their time here, and that the lines are so blurred you probably couldn't tell a gay bar from a straight bar. I like that we're now all able to interact and party together instead of being segregated.

How would you change the gay scene?

I don't think I would, it's perfectly fine as it is. It has a diverse number of bars, the best in the UK by far. I've been to most gay city venues and none compare to ours.

Time Out

Where do you like to go on a night out?

The Fox! And sometimes Sidewalk. Both venues play my favourite music, and they appeal to all my sets of friends.

What do you do to relax?

Read a book, watch a movie, listen to music.

What do you enjoy on telly?

Ooh, all the soaps! House renovation programmes too. And I love a good period drama.

What was the last album or track you bought?

The Weekend.

Which one website do you spend the most time on?

I probably shouldn't tell you this, but any site that sells clothes and shoes! What can I say? I'm a shopaholic!

Which type of holiday do you prefer?

Relaxed all the way. I want to lie by the beach or pool reading a good book, listening to music.

Quickfire

Who's your favourite actor?

Leonardo DiCaprio

What's your favourite book?

Wuthering Heights

Half empty or half full?

Half empty.

What's your favourite food?

Chinese.

And how about your favourite drink?

JD and Diet Coke

Madonna or Lady Gaga?

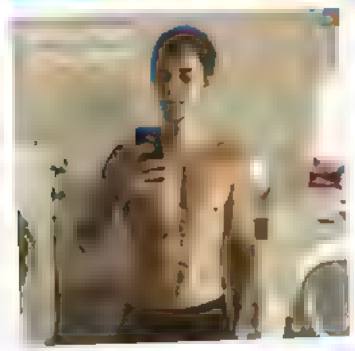
Madonna all the way! Lady Gaga can eat her dust!

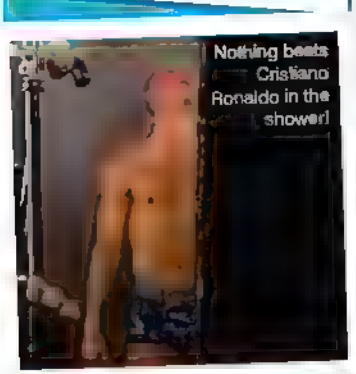
THE VIRAL ROUND UP

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN LOOKING AT ONLINE...

We all do it - spend hours on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. Often, we're distracted from what we should be doing by cat videos and funny pranks - or by something feelgood that's been shared so much on the net it's officially classed as 'viral'. Well, here are some of Midlands Zone's favourites from the past month!

CELEB SNAPS! OUR FAVOURITE PICTURES FROM INSTAGRAM...





Heartbreaking video: Parents tell gay son they **WON'T GO TO HIS WEDDING** because of their beliefs

Boy meets boy, they fall in love and decide to get married. It's a dream story. But when Chris told his religious parents he wanted them to attend the wedding, well, you can probably guess what happened...

With over 5 million views on our Facebook page, you can watch the heartbreaking video here fb.com/midlandszone

GAY TWINS read out each other's Grindr messages

Spending the night with twins may be many a gay guy's fantasy, but for modelling twin brothers Michael and Zach Zakar, it's absolutely not.

That becomes obvious when they read out their Grindr messages to each other, and we discover just how often they get asked!

Some of them are hilarious too, so be sure to check it out here youtu.be/0uc6vcF6wmg

we are family

EDITION

Fostering + Adoption + Parenthood

we are family

WE ARE FAMILY!

The annual LGBT Adoption & Fostering Week takes place this month. To mark the occasion, over the next eight pages we take a look at the options that are available to help you create your own magical family...

Along with falling in love and getting married, having children is part of the traditional life plan. And just because you're lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans doesn't mean you have to miss out on this exciting experience.

LGBT Adoption & Fostering Week (Monday 6 - Sunday 12 March) is run by New Family Social, the UK support group for LGBT adopters and foster carers.

Each spring, agencies across the UK hold events specifically for LGBT prospective parents. It's a great way for you to learn about all the different avenues into parenting.

The process of becoming an adopter or foster carer can be just as unpredictable and frustrating as it is enlightening and enjoyable. But once your child moves in, you'll soon forget what's gone before.

And sure, it won't be easy every minute of the day, but the difficulties will be worth it. To start with, you'll have given a home to a child who needs one. It's then up to you to give your child the benefit of your love, resourcefulness, resilience and sense of fun. In so doing, you'll be making a real difference to a youngster who may have had a difficult start in life.

Adoption and fostering is a very positive way to become a parent - as LGBT people across the Midlands and throughout the UK will happily testify.

So if you'd like to learn more, read on through our Family issue.

Alternatively, visit lgbtadoptfosterweek.org.uk to find an information event in a town near you.

WHAT DOES THE WORD FAMILY MEAN TO YOU?

We checked out the opinions of Andréa Willinger and Rachel Iles from Birmingham LGBT...

When I think of family, I immediately think of the people I've collected throughout my life who are always there for me in difficult times, as I am for them. They're the people who I've had some of the greatest times of my life with and made the best memories with

They are the people I feel I can just be 'me' around, they are the people who I've fallen out with and fought with but still love desperately. They are the people for whom I would do most anything and expect nothing in return. They are the people who always have my back and are always on my side

We are an assortment of people from differing backgrounds but with common themes of estrangement from our biological families. In a lot of ways, we fulfil each other's need to have a feeling of kinship.

We've grown from being a group of friends going out every weekend to now having immutable roles within each other's lives. We're the grandparents, aunties and uncles to each other's children, the family dinner hosts, birthday-party throwers, each other's emergency contacts or first points of call, the new-partner interrogators, hospital-bedside dwellers and painful-truth tellers. We are each other's family.

Andréa Willinger

I think to most people a family is very closely linked with a home. And as many people come to realise, a home doesn't have to be a fixed address or even an abode. As we grow up and discover who we are as people, we do inevitably build our own 'home' and, by default, our own 'family'.

For some people, this may be when they're young. For others, it may be about discovering who they truly are at more unconventional times in their lives.

The former was certainly the case for me. As I grew up and developed my own personal identity, the people closest to me became my family. Consequently, I now think of my small group of friends as my family, and where I feel at 'home' is with them. This could be in their houses, in our cars, out on a walk or even in a supermarket.

The people who I think of as 'family' have been there in tough times and situations. They're not my blood relatives, we're not a nuclear family or even an extended family. We're a bunch of twentysomethings bumbling through life in uncertain times. However, if one thing is certain, it's that I have my 'family' there to support me whenever and wherever I need them.

Rachel Iles

we are family

FOSTERING? You can do it!

Gay and single? One half of a same-sex couple? If you imagine that either or both of those situations would stop you from fostering a child, you're not alone. And luckily, you're also wrong...

There may come a time, whether you have a partner or not, when you start to feel there's a significant gap in your life. That gap is often caused by the lack of a child or children running around the house - someone for you to raise, look after and protect.
There are plenty of people who feel this way, and a great option for starting a family is fostering. Not only will you find it rewarding, it's also a crucial step in giving a child a second chance in life.

A lot of people actually rule themselves out of fostering for reasons that are usually not relevant, whether it's because they are over a certain age, not married, living in a rented house, haven't brought up children of their own or don't have a job. But none of these would stop somebody from becoming a foster carer

And nor will being gay, whether you're single or in a relationship. Gay people make fabulous parents!

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council is an organisation that offers the option of fostering to the LGBT community. All that they ask is that all carers are able to offer a stable home and a nurturing environment with suitable space (that's to say, a suitable spare room).

But what about all the skills that are needed to become a foster carer? Well, luckily for anybody who's interested but lacking self-belief, Sandwell Council is on hand to help What all foster carers need is an interest in child welfare. That's the starting point. Many of the people who typically make contact when looking to foster have been thinking about having children for years. So if there's a gap in your life and you have the patience and resilience to offer a child a home, fostering could be the answer you've been looking for

Some people become long-term foster carers. Working with a child or children in placement until they become adults can very successfully create that yearned-for family unit.

Other people prefer short-term fostering, allowing them to play a role in preparing a child or children for long-term foster care, adoption or, where appropriate, a return to their birth family.

These are only two examples of the various ways you can foster. Each application to foster is looked at individually. Part of that process is getting to know how you live your life and what your support networks are. Social workers may even surprise you by suggesting a type of fostering you hadn't thought of!

The fact is, there's a really urgent need for the next generation of foster carers to step forward. Like most local authorities, Sandwell want 'people who care' to help look after the children and young people who need it most

Fostering a child isn't always easy. It can be challenging, yes, but it will also be rewarding. So if you've ruled yourself out of becoming a foster carer but are now thinking again, why not give Sandwell a call? You could find it changes more than just your *own* life

For more information, get in touch with Fostering With Sandwell by calling 0800 358 0899, visiting sandwell.gov.uk/fostering or popping along to their fostering information evening at Blackheath Library on Thursday 30 March at 6.30pm.

Foster with us

Thursday 30 March at 6:30pm
Blackheath Library, B65 0EA

JOIN US!

0800 358 0859

we are family

YOUR PRIDE AND JOY...

There are numerous options available when it comes to having a family of your own, the best known being fostering and adoption. Another route you could consider, though, is fertility treatment. Zone here takes a look at the services offered to the LGBT community by the well-established IVI Midland Fertility...

For 30 years, IVI Midland Fertility has helped lesbian and gay couples to become families. Almost 7,000 babies have been born since the clinic was established in 1987. Many of these were as a result of treatment with donor IUI or donor IVF, and also IVF surrogacy.
And for over 20 years, the organisation has also helped trans people to preserve their fertility for possible future genetic parenthood.

In 2016, IVI Midland Fertility introduced inclusive paperwork, meaning that all patients, whether male, female, trans male, trans female, couples or single women, are asked to complete only information that is relevant to them, whether they're having treatment to conceive or to preserve their fertility for a future attempt at parenthood. The organisation is proud to have led the way with regard to this - and the fertility regulator (the HFEA) is now following its lead!

Services for gay couples

IVI Midland Fertility offers gay couples the chance of fatherhood using an egg donor and a separate surrogate mother. Both partners are guided through the legal and medical aspects of surrogacy by specially trained clinical, laboratory and counselling staff
Surrogacy needs donor eggs and will require either IVF or ICSI treatment. The commissioning couple, the egg donor and the surrogate all receive extensive and separate consultations from different members of the clinical team. The consultations cover the medical, scientific, emotional and legal issues of surrogacy, and the welfare interests of any current or future children

The surrogacy route doesn't have to take years to complete, even if you have to arrange a surrogate through one of the specialist charities. But having a known surrogate or egg donor - maybe a friend or a relative (though they can't be the same person) - can shorten the treatment time to just a few months.

Services for lesbian couples

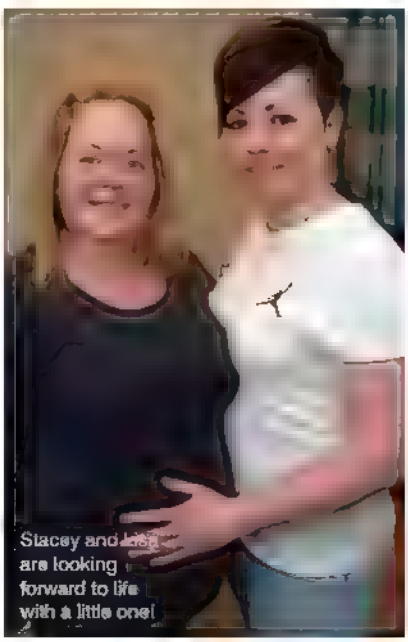
Whether the required treatment is IUI or IVF - including shared motherhood or 'reciprocal IVF' - with sperm from a known donor, or from a screened donor IVI Midland Fertility has sourced, the team can guide you every step of the way through your treatment plan - from initial tests to results, treatment, planning and counselling (if required), right up to the first pregnancy scan and beyond

The clinic's friendly and expert team has been helping lesbian couples to become parents for nearly 30 years. It offers a safe, secure and successful way of conceiving, and its success rates are pretty amazing. In fact, IVI Midland Fertility has an IVF pregnancy rate of 49.3% for women under the age of 38, compared to the national average of 31.6%.

Fertility preservation

Are you transgender and know you will want a family one day, but maybe not just yet? If so, before any trans treatment, you can use the organisation's fertility preservation services for freezing and storing sperm and eggs. This will allow you the chance of genetic parenthood when the time is right for you, either following any trans surgery or simply after you've met 'Mr/Ms Right'
IVI Midland Fertility has been freezing sperm for 30 years and was the first UK clinic to have a live-birth from frozen eggs. Its inclusive approach means that it's absolutely the place to trust with your fertility preservation

For find out more, visit midlandfertility.com



Stacey and Lisa are looking forward to life with a little one!

WOLVERHAMPTON LADIES IN WAITING

From the time they became a couple in 2008, Stacey and Lisa from Wolverhampton knew they wanted children.

"We knew we wanted to go to a reputable fertility clinic and use a sperm donor who was unknown to us," says Lisa. "We also had an idea that would make us both a fundamental part of our potential child's life - we wanted to use my eggs and for Stacey to carry the pregnancy."

The treatment Stacey (34) and Lisa (28) wanted was launched in 2016 by IVI Midland Fertility as 'shared motherhood' - where one of the partners is the genetic mother and the other is the birth mother.

So Lisa went through an IVF cycle of self-administered daily injections to stimulate her ovaries and then underwent an egg collection, with 15 eggs being retrieved.

The eggs were then fertilised with the donor sperm the clinic had sourced for the couple. One of the resulting embryos was transferred to Stacey's uterus the same week. Sadly for the couple, this first treatment cycle was unsuccessful.

However, they were able to use one of their frozen embryos for a second transfer - and after another anxious two-week wait, the couple were rewarded with a positive pregnancy test.

"We were absolutely thrilled!" says Stacey. "And when we saw that tiny flickering heartbeat on the first scan, it all became real!"

Stacey and Lisa are currently enjoying their shared pregnancy. Their baby is due later in the spring.

Your pride and joy!

Make your dream of a family a reality

IVI Midland Fertility is dedicated to 'building futures, transforming lives' – including those of the hundreds of gay and lesbian couples whom we have helped to have children, for more than 25 years. Whether you are looking to have a baby, or to preserve your fertility for future parenthood, our team offers individualised treatment plans, in the privacy and comfort of the clinic located in a private building on the Tamworth retail parks. L, G, B or T, we can help you with your dream of parenthood.

Midland Fertility, Tamworth House, Ventura Park Road, Tamworth B78 3HL

t 01827 311170 e contact@midlandfertility.com w midlandfertility.com

IVI midland fertility

we are family

COULD YOU FOSTER A SHROPSHIRE CHILD?

All of us need some care and attention in our lives. There's nothing wrong with that. But imagine being a child in need of fostering or adoption. Shropshire certainly has a number of such children.

Childhood is a crucial time in life, and children need someone to provide them with some care and attention.

Many people still think that you have to be a married, straight couple to foster or adopt. That couldn't be further from the truth. You can be single, cohabiting, male or female, gay or straight.

In fact, there are many single people and couples from Shropshire's LGBT community who are already foster carers, or who've adopted a child or even siblings.

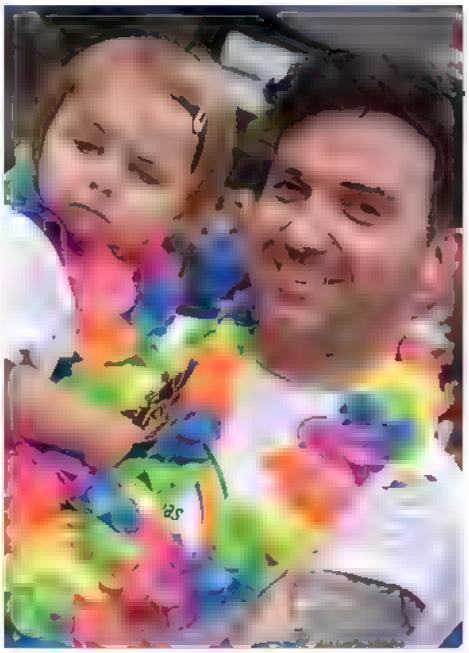
As part of LGBT Adoption & Fostering Week (6 - 12 March), the community is being encouraged to find out more about fostering and/or adopting a child or children, ranging in age from the very young through to teenagers.

"We're particularly keen to hear from members of the LGBT community in Shropshire who would consider fostering," says Steve Ladd, Shropshire Council Service Manager. "It's not just families that can foster. Whether single, a couple, older or young and no matter what your ethnicity or background, you may make a great foster or adoptive parent. It's about being able to provide a loving, caring and stable environment for children of all ages who haven't necessarily had the best start in life."

Fostering can involve many tasks, from day-to-day care, taking them to school or preparing them for college, to preparing meals, helping with homework and engaging in leisure activities. From time to time, it will also require attendance at meetings with social workers and members of the fostering team.

But most importantly, it's about being there for a Shropshire child, in what can be a very unstable time in their life.

If you think you could be a foster carer or adopt a child, call 0800 783 8798 or visit www.shropshire.gov.uk/fostering.



Could you foster a Shropshire child?
Just like foster children, carers come from all walks of life, whether single, married or in a same-sex relationship. Could you foster?
Why not find out more?
Call us on 0800 783 8798, visit our website at www.shropshiregov.uk/fostering or email us at shropshirefostering@ontracagency.com
www.shropshire.gov.uk/fostering

FOSTER A CHILD IN HEREFORDSHIRE & TELFORD

Being a successful fostering agency is all about finding the right families to give vulnerable children the love, care and support they need to live a happy and fulfilling life.

Across the country, the number of children needing to be fostered is increasing. Here in the Midlands, one of the agencies working hard to find those in-need youngsters new and happy homes is Red Kite Fostering

Based in the heart of rural Herefordshire, Red Kite is an independent, family-run fostering agency with a diverse range of successful foster homes. The organisation has now opened a second office in Telford

We spoke to the agency to find out more about fostering and how it works

What types of foster placement are there?

Over the years families have changed, and so has fostering Red Kite Foster Carers provide a wide range of foster-care placements, from long-term to short-term ones, and from mother & baby placements to looking after children with disabilities. Carers can choose to offer emergency foster homes or provide respite breaks for other carers and families

What type of person do I have to be to foster a child?

Like children, foster carers come in all shapes and sizes, so there's no 'ideal' carer

All Red Kite requires is that you are over 21 years of age and have somewhere to live that has a spare bedroom for a child. Ideally you will have a sense of humour be able to keep going when things get difficult, and have a keen interest in helping a child succeed in life despite any setbacks they may have experienced

Foster carers come from all walks of life, from all backgrounds and cultures. They can be single or in a relationship, young or older, employed or not in paid employment. What they will all have in common is a shared set of values and a desire to help others.

What can I expect when applying to foster?

Every foster carer has to be assessed and receive training to help them deal with all the challenges they'll face while looking after a child

They are supported by social workers, family support workers and a number of other professionals who make sure that everything goes as planned. Sometimes there are setbacks or difficulties and that's when the training and support is essential

Is it rewarding?

Foster carers at Red Kite are very well paid for their work, but the biggest reward is seeing the dramatic and positive changes that come about in a child you care for

If you like the idea of fostering and want to know more, give Red Kite Fostering a call on 01544 231657

COULD YOU BE THE FIRST TO TAKE THEM ON ADVENTURES?

HELP OPEN UP A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES...

Red Kite Fostering

Kington - 01544 231657 Telford - 01952 683682

Email: info@redkitefostering.co.uk

www.redkitefostering.co.uk

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Birmingham pride

2017 THEME **LOVE & PRIDE**
To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality

GREAT GRUB AT THE LOFT

The Birmingham restaurant, located in the heart of the city's Southside district, certainly hits the spot - as Midlands Zone's Lauren Foster finds out...

Located in the heart of Birmingham's Southside district and having recently undergone a huge refurbishment and rebrand, The Loft (formerly The Loft Lounge) prides itself on bringing traditional British fare - accompanied with speciality spirits, cocktails and craft beers - to the bustling city centre.

On arrival at the venue, we were politely greeted and shown over to our table - a cosy little alcove in the dimly lit bar area.
The venue's friendly and welcoming atmosphere, allied to its impressively stylish look, made for a positive first impression.
So far, so good!

Whilst perusing the menu, and upon recommendation from our friendly and attentive waiter (Jon Ingram), I enjoyed one of The Loft's intriguing cocktails. I opted for a Molly Cavalli - a pornstar martini with a salted caramel twist. Served in a takeaway coffee cup with half a passion fruit, it was extremely tasty.
The bartender clearly knows his stuff.

From the Nibbles section of the menu, we chose the satay-glazed chicken wings and the chipotle, garlic and honey-glazed beef ribs. The ribs were some of the nicest I've ever tasted. The meat was cooked to absolute perfection and fell off the bone. The sauce had a slight kick and boasted a sticky, strong and delicious flavour. The wings were also cooked really nicely, with a generous coating of satay sauce. Being greedy, we also ordered the smoked salmon served with oyster mayonnaise and pickled veg off the Valentine's menu. It proved to be another tasty dish made with top-quality ingredients, with all the flavours working well together.

Next up, the mains. We were spoilt for choice! From land plates, sea plates and field plates to flat bread pizzas, the menu had it all. After much deliberation we opted for the grilled lamb fillets served with courgette, stuffed slow-roasted tomatoes and caper butter, and the braised pork served with celeriac, roasted apple sauce and crackling bites.

Both dishes were fantastic. The pork was cooked to perfection, providing a melt-in-the-mouth sensation, and was beautifully complemented by the dish's other elements. We particularly welcomed the addition of the crackling bites. Every meat-eater loves crackling, right? Similarly, the lamb was cooked well and seasoned nicely. The caper butter was a really tasty addition to the dish, providing small, salty bursts of flavour.

Following a delicious and comically named Suck And Swallow cocktail (presented in a plastic bag with a chupa chups lolly), we managed to squeeze in dessert, despite being suitably full. From their Valentine's menu, I opted for the dark chocolate and fig tart, served with ice cream. My partner chose the ever-so-naughty double chocolate brownie sundae with whipped cream, salted caramel sauce, vanilla ice cream and pecans. Both were very filling, very tasty and a great end to the evening.

In addition to its everyday menu, The Loft serves a wide range of Saturday and Sunday brunch options, including pastries, ciabattas and a full English, all of which are available till 5pm. Bottomless brunch is also available upon request. They also have beef, chicken, pork belly and vegetarian Sunday lunches available for £19.50 for two people - a reasonable price tag for the quality of the food.

The Loft is perfect for groups of friends and couples alike. With DJs and live music to enjoy, as well as a stunning outdoor space, it's somewhere I'll certainly be returning to in the future.

If you're a lover of relaxed dining, reasonably priced dishes and high-quality ingredients, this place is for you. The service was fantastic, and that, alongside the tasty food, chilled-out atmosphere and stylish surroundings, certainly made for a very enjoyable evening.

Food:	
Service:	
Ambience:	
Overall value:	
OVERALL	

The Loft is situated at 143 Bromsgrove Street, Southside, Birmingham. Book yourself a table by calling 0121 622 2444 or visit theloftbrum.co.uk for more information.

Fancy a coffee?

Coffee culture in Birmingham is positively booming. From artisan roasteries to quirky cafes, the city is full of hidden gems catering with passion and skill to the increasing demand and desire for high-quality coffee. Midlands Zone has handpicked some of Brum's best independent coffee shops for you to try out

Quarter Horse Coffee

The delicious aroma of roasting coffee beans completely fills the air in this stylish and minimalistic cafe and roastery. You can listen to the gentle hum of the roaster and see the process in action while you sip on the great-tasting coffee. Recently named as one of Britain's best coffee shops by the editor of Caffeine magazine, Chloe Callow, Quarter Horse distributes their freshly roasted coffee to a variety of venues all around Birmingham.

88-90 Bristol St, B5 7AH

200 Degrees

Located in the heart of Birmingham's commercial district, the new coffee shop from 200 Degrees - small batch coffee roasters based in Nottingham - is already proving to be extremely popular.

The coffee gurus at the cafe share their expertise at the in-store Barista School. Learn how to be a barista, how to brew the perfect coffee at home or how to create the best eye-catching latte art.

21 Colmore Row, B3 2BH

Yorks Bakery Cafe

At Yorks Cafe and Coffee Roasters, great quality Birmingham coffee is roasted on site. This beautifully decorated gem of a cafe hosts live jazz nights every Monday and serves up a variety of craft beers, wine and cocktails. Yorks also has an Espresso Bar on Colmore Row and is getting ready to open more cafes and expand its coffee-roasting business.

29/30 Stephenson St, B2 4BH & 16a Colmore Row, B2 5HU

Six Eight Kafe

Back in 2011, this cafe was opened by four passionate coffee lovers who have since set the bar high for other independent coffee shops in Birmingham. Six Eight is now a legendary cafe firmly established within the city's coffee scene. Regular live music, art and poetry events take place at the Temple Row site, accompanied by craft beer and award-winning coffee.

6/8 Temple Row, B2 5HG & Floor 2, Millennium Point, Curzon St, B4 7XG

Madcup

This new and trendy cafe is bringing some Australian coffee culture to Birmingham. The all-white modern cafe, complete with quirky finishing touches, offers something a little different alongside its regular coffee. With rose-infused matcha lattes, golden turmeric lattes and pink velvet hot chocolates made with raw cacao, beets and maple syrup on the menu, Madcup is the place to be if you're after a perfect health kick.

20 Alcester Rd S, Kings Heath, B14 7PU

Tilt

You can enjoy a game of pinball with your cup of great-tasting speciality coffee or glass of craft beer at this alternative and relaxed coffee bar. What could be better? Tilt choose guest roasters from all over the world to showcase the best seasonal coffees so that you'll always get great-tasting coffee.

2 City Arcade, Union St, B2 4TX

Faculty

Nestled away in the historic Piccadilly Arcade, close to New Street Station, is a small and intimate cafe with a focus on high-quality speciality coffee and tea. As though working in a coffee laboratory, expert baristas at Faculty use a variety of methods and tools such as AeroPress, V60 pour-overs and sand timers to ensure that each cup is brewed and poured to perfection.

14 Piccadilly Arcade, B2 4HD

Urban Emporiums

Formally Urban Coffee Company, Urban is a veteran of the independent coffee scene in Birmingham. As well as serving great coffee at both Urban Emporiums, a bottomless brunch with all-you-can-drink Bucks Fizz and Bloody Marys is on offer every weekend at the Church Street coffee shop. We like the sound of that!

30 Church St, B3 2NP & The Big Peg, Warstone Ln, Jewellery Quarter, B18 6NF

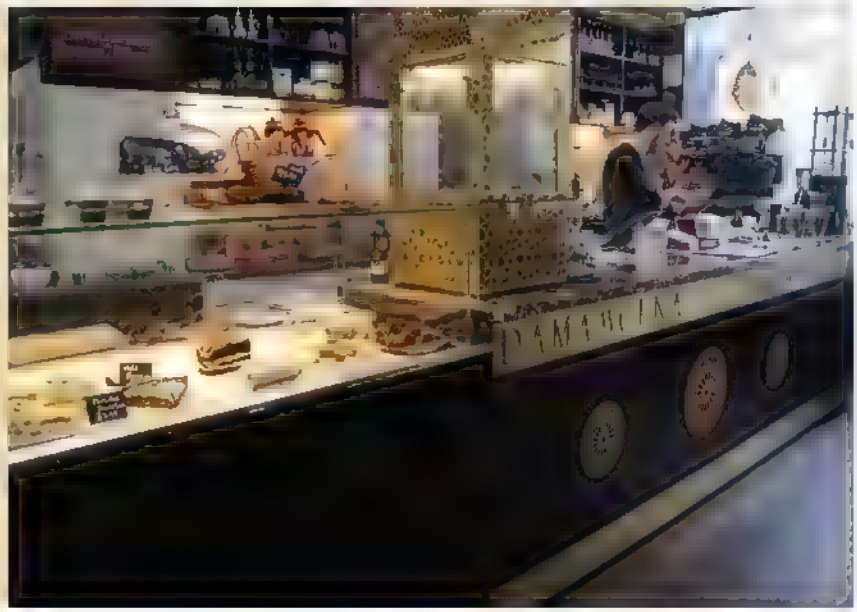
The new kid on the block...

Damascena Coffee House

A new branch of Moseley's award-winning coffee house, delicatessen and bakery has recently opened in Birmingham city centre and is already proving to be a big hit.

Serving Turkish, strong Arabic and Arabian spiced coffee, the venue offers a real taste of the Middle East and North Africa. Follow the road to Damascena - meaning Damascus rose - and enjoy the stunning decor and wide range of delicious Syrian-inspired food, from meze platters with falafel and hummus to fattoush salads and freshly baked flatbreads.

5-7 Temple Row West, Birmingham, B2 5NY and 133 Alcester Road, Moseley, B13 8JP



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NHS

13-18 and LGBT+?

Come to Galaxy, a youth group for young people, aged 18 and under, who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or unsure.

- Make friends
- Meet other LGBT+ young people
- Get sexual health and relationship advice

Saturdays from 12-4pm at The Piccadilly Centre

57-59 Piccadilly, Hanley, ST1 1HR

facebook.com/galaxyyouth

ON-THE-GO GADGETS

The latest tech and accessories!

01 Google Pixel Blue

Pixel is the first smartphone exclusively created by Google. The smartphone features a five-inch Full HD display, top-quality 12.3MP camera and unlimited storage for all your photos and videos.
It's also the first Android phone to feature Google Assistant - ask it questions and tell it to do things. The more you use it, the more useful it gets.

Now available in blue for the first time!

From £619
carphonewarehouse.com

02 Beats X Wireless Earphones

BeatsX earphones are the perfect wireless companion. Experience authentic, clear sound throughout your day with up to eight hours of battery life. With Fast Fuel, a five-minute charge gives you two hours of playback. The unique Flex-Form cable provides all-day comfort and easy pocket portability, while eartip options provide a personalised fit, and secure-fit wingtips offer added stability.

£129.95
apple.com/uk

03 B&O Beoplay H4

Stripped back to a minimal what-you-see-is-what-you-get look, Beoplay H4 are take-anywhere, wireless over-ear headphones with a focus on pure essentials. With a staggering 18-hour battery life, you can listen to music pretty much all day.

£249.00
beoplay.com

04 LG Watch Sport

The new LG Watch Sport combines the best in style and technology. Featuring the latest Android Wear 2.0 and a new look, this smartwatch boasts a rotating crown for easy navigation, is water and dust-resistant and has a crystal-clear screen.

£349.99
mobilefun.co.uk

05 TomTom Touch Cardio

A handy, wearable device from TomTom, the Touch Cardio allows you to measure body fat and muscle-mass percentage, provides 24/7 activity tracking and heart-rate monitoring, and receives notifications from your phone.

£129.99
tomtom.com

HEY GOOD LOOKIN'

HOT NEW FASHION

01 Black Colour Block Spliced T-shirt

£12.99

newlook.com

02 Padded Harrington Jacket with Borg Collar

£35.00

boohooman.com

03 Skinny Fit Hooded Ribbed Tracksuit

£35.00

boohooman.com

04 Knitted Mesh T-shirt

£25.00

05 Blue Faded Muscle Fit Roller T-shirt

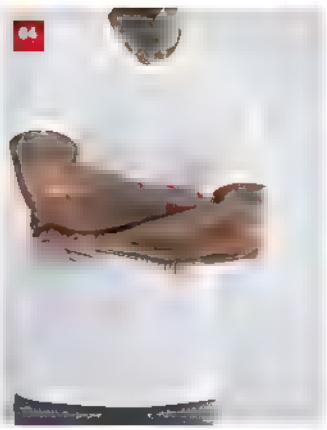
£15.00

topman.com

06 Selected Homme Knitted Jumper with Melange Detail

£30.00

asos.com



SWINGAMAJIG

APRIL 30TH 2017

A SHOW LIKE NO OTHER

7 STAGES OF LIVE BANDS, DJS,
CABARET, DANCE, MAGIC AND MORE
FEAT. THE CORRESPONDENTS, THE FREESYLERS,
ELECTRIC SWING CIRCUS, SAM & THE VOMP
+ 70 OTHER ACTS...

FROM 14:00 - 02:00, TICKETS FROM £20, 18+ ONLY

THE VINTAGE BAZAAR

VINTAGE/CRAFT MARKET, STREET-FOOD,
SWING DANCE TASTER CLASSES AND GAMES

FROM 11:00 - 18:00, FREE ENTRY FOR ALL

WWW.SWINGAMAJIG.CO.UK

THE DIGBETH TRIANGLE, BIRMINGHAM

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

RAGTIME RECORDS

SWING ERA

GET YOUR COPY DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR EVERY MONTH

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Yes, we know you're wondering what the catch is.

Well, there isn't one!

We've ripped up our subscription rates so that more of you can get the **No.1 gay magazine** in the Midlands delivered direct to your front door every month.

And at just £2 an issue to cover the postage and packing there's never been a better time to get it delivered!

It's easy - just call our Subscription Hotline on 01743 281714

Simply pay the postage and packing cost of £2 per issue by debit or credit card!

That's Entertainment!

This month's hot DVD, music and book releases...

DVD TAEKWONDO 15

Fernando is on holiday with his closest friends in a beautiful country house in a chic suburb of Buenos Aires. Without the presence of their girlfriends, the boys are eager to talk about their deepest feelings, their sexual desire for the girls, their fear of the future and their conflicts.
Disconnected from the outside world, they do little more than bask in the hot sun, play in the swimming pool, smoke pot and drink.
But then Fernando decides to invite along a newcomer - Germán - a close friend from his Taekwondo class. German is quickly accepted by the group, but has a preference that Fernando ignores - a preference for men.
Little by little, the two friends become closer and more intimate - but should they be explicit about how they feel or not?...

Released Monday 27 March

DVD I AM MICHAEL 15

I Am Michael is the true-life story of Michael Glatze (played by James Franco), a high-profile gay youth activist who created a national controversy when he claimed he was no longer gay and became a straight Christian pastor.
The film follows Michael from his life in San Francisco with boyfriend Bennett (Zachary Quinto) to his days of personal self-discovery.
After a traumatic scare, Michael is plagued by doubt and paranoia - and so begins his religious reawakening.
Renouncing his gay lifestyle and rejecting his friends, he endeavours to find his 'true self'.

Released Monday 3 April

BOOK MUSSOLINI'S ISLAND by Sarah Day

When Francesco is rounded up with a group of young men and herded into a camp on the island of San Domino, he realises that someone has handed a list of names to the fascist police.
Former lover Emilio is constantly agitating for revolution. Old friend Gio jealously watches their relationship rekindle. Locked in spartan dormitories, resentment and bitterness between the men grows each day.
Elena, a young and illiterate island girl on the cusp of womanhood, is drawn to the handsome Francesco.
But when she discovers the truth about the group of prisoners, the fine line between love and hate pulls her towards an act that will have terrible consequences for all.

MUSIC ÷ by Ed Sheeran

Ed's third studio offering is on course to become one of the most significant global album releases of 2017, and finds the 25-year-old Suffolk native in his finest form yet.
Musically, ÷ is an array of beautifully orchestrated and emotive ballads, impassioned raps laid over hip-hop beats, timeless acoustic guitar masterpieces and innovative, idiosyncratic pop music.
The genre-defying LP is the result of Sheeran consistently pushing himself in new directions, uncovering fresh musical ground using a seemingly limitless musical vocabulary.
Drawing inspiration from a host of personal experiences and subjects, Ed takes the listener on a hugely personal journey, reflecting on past relationships, family memories, his music career and his time travelling the world in 2016.

notnow

WONDERWOMAN
THE NAKED TRUTH

UTTERLY FUNNY AND PAINFULLY HONEST HOUR WITH TWO MUMS ON STAGE

mac, Birmingham
B12 9QH
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12pm & 7.30pm
0121 446 3232
macbirmingham.co.uk
matinees are baby friendly

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

stuff and nonsense

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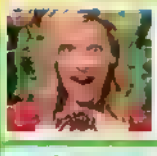
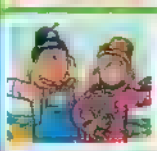
family

THSH
TOWN HALL SYMPHONY HALL BIRMINGHAM

SUPERHEROES AT THE SYMPHONY
SUN 12 MARCH 3PM
SYMPHONY HALL

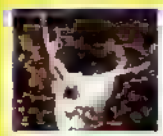


NAOMI'S WILD & SCARY
SATURDAY 8 APRIL 11AM
TOWN HALL

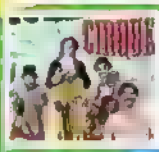


THE SCARECROW'S WEDDING
FRI 14 APR 1PM
SAT 15 APR 11AM & 1PM
TOWN HALL

LORD OF THE DANCE: DANGEROUS GAMES
WED 19 – SUN 23 APRIL
SYMPHONY HALL

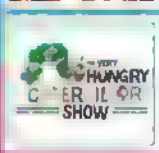


AN EVENING OF MUSIC AND DANCE WITH BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET
SAT 29 APRIL 7.30PM
SYMPHONY HALL



MNOZIL BRASS FAMILY SHOW
SATURDAY 6 MAY 2.30PM
TOWN HALL

FAMILY CEILIDH WITH RABSCALLION
SAT 13 MAY 10.30AM
TOWN HALL
part of MAGNED ISLE FESTIVAL 2017



THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR SHOW
SAT 27 MAY 12.30PM & 2.30PM
TOWN HALL

Funded by
Birmingham City Council
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND
Town Hall renovation also funded by
heritage lottery fund LOTTERY FUNDED
PROJECT PART-FINANCED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

Box office
0121 780 3333
www.thsh.co.uk

ZONE hotlist

THIS MONTH'S HOT EVENTS & THINGS TO SEE AND DO

1 BILLY ELLIOT

Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 7 March - Sat 29 April

Based on the hit movie of the same name, Billy Elliot is set in the north east of England against the backdrop of the historic 1980s miners' strike. Billy wants to be a dancer but feels that he must keep his ambition secret, to avoid the disapproval of his struggling family.

The award-winning show – it's bagged 10 Tonys and five Olivier Awards – features the iconic music of Sir Elton John and is here visiting the Midlands as part of its first ever UK tour.

"Billy Elliot tells two different stories about trying to overcome adversity," says Scott Garnham, who plays Billy's older brother and local strike ringleader, Tony. "One is about a little boy trying to escape his environment, the other is about the strike. And where one succeeds, the other fails spectacularly.

"When we take the show to places near mining communities, I feel like they really get what we're trying to say with our story. In Sunderland, you could see fully-grown men crying in the audience when we talked about how there'd be no pits left in 10 years' time."

2 BALLETBOYZ: LIFE

Nottingham Playhouse, Mon 6 March

The [illegible] and always memorable BalletBoyz are back! [illegible] premiere of [illegible] the young Life is performed by [illegible] dancers in 10 dances and excerpts of work by international [illegible] choreographers Rabbit by Pontus Lidberg and Fiction by Javier de Frutos.

The production takes an elegant, powerful and provocative look at life and death, presented in the inimitable BalletBoyz style.

3 RENT: THE MUSICAL

Curve, Leicester
Tues 28 March - Sat 1 April

Bruce Guthrie's brand new production shows Leicester as the landmark rock musical celebrates its 20th anniversary.

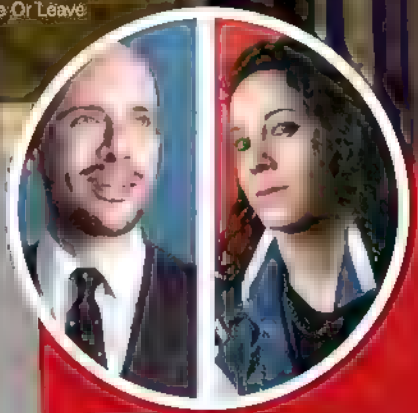
Rent tells the story of a group of impoverished young artists struggling to survive in New York City's East Village during the days of Bohemian excess.

The cast includes Lucie Jones (Curve's Legally Blonde The Musical, The X Factor, Les Misérables) and Layton Williams (Curve's Hairspray, Bad Education, Billy Elliot The Musical).

Inspired by Puccini's classic opera La Bohème, Rent features music and lyrics by Jonathan Larson, including much-loved songs Seasons Of Love, Take Me Or Leave Me and La Vie Bohème.

4 DOREEN'S GRAND NIGHT OUT

With a unique mixture of satirical stand-up (and sit down), music and video surprises, local treasure and internet sensation Doreen assesses the state of the nation as only she can. And no doubt charabancs of local folk will assemble to hear her Black [illegible] can be a very special night. In fact, it will be Grand



5 TOM ALLEN & SUZI RUFFELL

Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, Fri 17 March; Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-on-Trent, Sat 18 March

A peculiar pair, with Tom and Suzi each taking an hour of the show.

Allen is a master of camp comedy. Often likened in style to legendary raconteurs Kenneth Williams and Frankie Howard, he also doffs his comedian's cap in the direction of Michael McIntyre and Eddie Izzard.

Ruffell here looks back to her formative years for her inspiration. Gay, quirky and delightfully self-deprecating, she's certainly made good progress in the world of stand-up comedy over the last couple of years.

6 WONDERWOMAN: THE NAKED TRUTH

mac, Birmingham, Fri 17 March

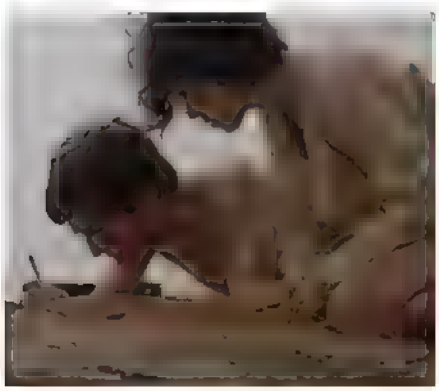
"How do we discuss sex in front of the sandpit, write a thriller inside a playpen and arrange a hot date whilst playing Lego?" ask Croatian artists and long-term Birmingham residents Tina Hofman and Kristina Gavran. "To work or not to work? That is the question. Our ambition didn't disappear when we had kids. It is ever-present, and often in conflict. Can we soothe our babies and our ambition? .."

Tina and Kristina present Wonderwoman via Notnow Collective, a company they co-founded in order to contemplate the subjects of family, parenthood and work-home balance in a 'challenging, highly visual and immersive way'

8 XXY

Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham, Sun 19 March

Alex, a 15-year-old girl with both male and female sexual organs, begins to explore her sexuality. Her mother invites friends from Buenos Aires and their 16-year-old son Álvaro (Martin Piroyansky) to visit them at their house on the gorgeous Uruguayan shore. Alex is immediately attracted to the young man - a fact which not only adds yet another level of complexity to her personal search for identity but also forces both families to face their worst fears



7 BEAUTY & THE BEAST

Starring **Emma Watson, Dan Stevens, Luke Evans, Kevin Kline, Josh Gad, Ewan McGregor, Stanley Tucci, Ian McKellen, Emma Thompson, Gugu Mbatha-Raw**
Directed by **Bill Condon** (USA)

In the tradition of Maleficent and Cinderella, Disney have turned another of their cartoon classics into a live-action showpiece. This one features songs from the 1991 film (including Be Our Guest and the title number), as well as new material penned by Tim Rice and the original composer, Alan Menken. The story, in case you've forgotten, is of a beautiful young woman (Watson) who is taken prisoner by a Beast (Stevens) who can only shed his grotesque appearance when he is loved for who he is.

Not to be confused with the French film of the same name (starring Lea Seydoux) that was released in the UK last November in 3D.

Released Fri 17 March

9 MCM COMIC CON BIRMINGHAM

NEC, Birmingham, Sat 18 - Sun 19 March

An MCM (Movies, Comics & Media) Comic Con is a world unto itself. Cartoon characters spring to life, supernatural creatures freely roam, stalls are swelled with merchandise, unique fan creations stretch as far as the eye can see, and video and tabletop gaming become serious competitive sports.

"The Midlands holds a special place in our hearts," says MCM Expo Group CEO Bryan Cooney. "Our company is based here, and we plan on providing an awesome show for the region's enthusiastic audience of sci-fi, comic book and film fans."

The show's line-up features indie writers and artists filling the Comic Village, robot wars, a Steampunk Emporium with workshops and talks, a KidsZone, eSports competitions, panel discussions, a costume-repair desk and the Cosplay Masquerade finale.

WIN! A pair of tickets to Swingamajig!

Returning to Birmingham for the fifth year, Swingamajig is a unique festival which invites Electro Swing lovers and vintage connoisseurs to take to the streets and party in style.

Taking place on Sunday 30 April in Digbeth, the popular festival brings 'the sounds and styles of the 1920s up to date with a modern twist'.

This year's event not only features festival creators and organisers Electric Swing Circus but also The Correspondents, The Freestylers, Sam And The Womp, Mr Tea And The Minions, C@ And The H@, Sharna Mae And The Mayhems, The Jim Wynn Swing Orchestra and more.

Midlands Zone has teamed up with Swingamajig to offer one lucky reader the chance to win a pair of tickets to this vibrant, one-of-a-kind event.

To enter this amazing competition, all you need to do is visit midlandszone.co.uk and answer this simple question:

Which decade does Swingamajig honour?

A) 1920s
B) 1930s
C) 1940s

To enter this competition, simply visit midlandszone.co.uk before Friday 31 March

MUSEUM & ART GALLERY
BIRMINGHAM
WATERHALL GALLERY
New Art West Midlands Exhibition 2017
FREE
SAT 18 FEB – SUN 14 MAY
A showcase of the region's best emerging artists
#NewArtWestMidlands2017
Also at:
MAC, BIRMINGHAM
Sat 18 Feb – Sun 14 May
WOLVERHAMPTON ART GALLERY
Sat 18 Feb – Sun 14 May
WORCESTER CITY ART GALLERY & MUSEUM
Sat 18 Feb – Sat 3 Jun
birminghammuseums.org.uk
Funded by
Birmingham City Council
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND
Image: The Circle of Nature, (2016) by Lisa Nash
© the artist, photography courtesy of Ilona Zielinska
Birmingham Museums

CABARET FUN IN BRUM
Fun-filled cabaret magic hits Birmingham's gay village!

XXL RETURNS TO BRUM
The hugely popular men's club night returns to The Core Club

9TH BIRTHDAY FOR
Big birthday bash with Kevin Simm and Mary Mac

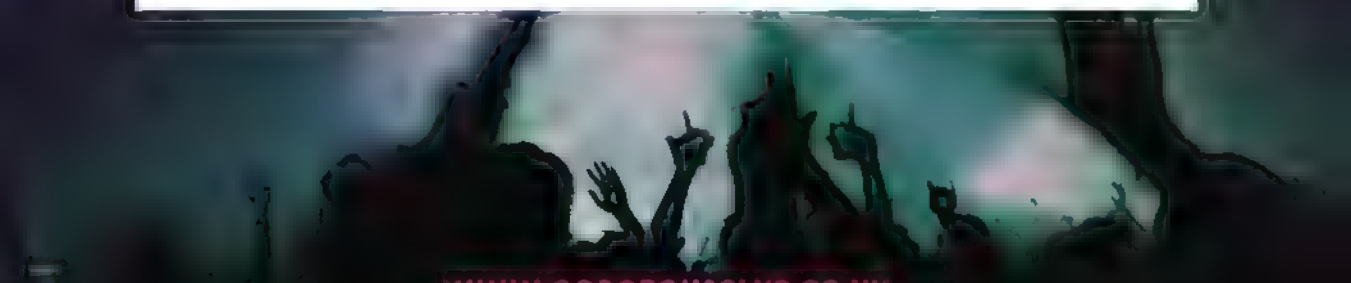
GORGEOUS

THURSDAY 1-6AM | FRIDAY 12-6AM | SATURDAY 11PM-6AM

2 BARS | VIP BOOTHS | VIP LOUNGE

KEEPING WOLVERHAMPTON OUT!

OFFICIALLY THE MIDLANDS BEST GAY NIGHTCLUB! (MIDLANDS ZONE AWARDS)

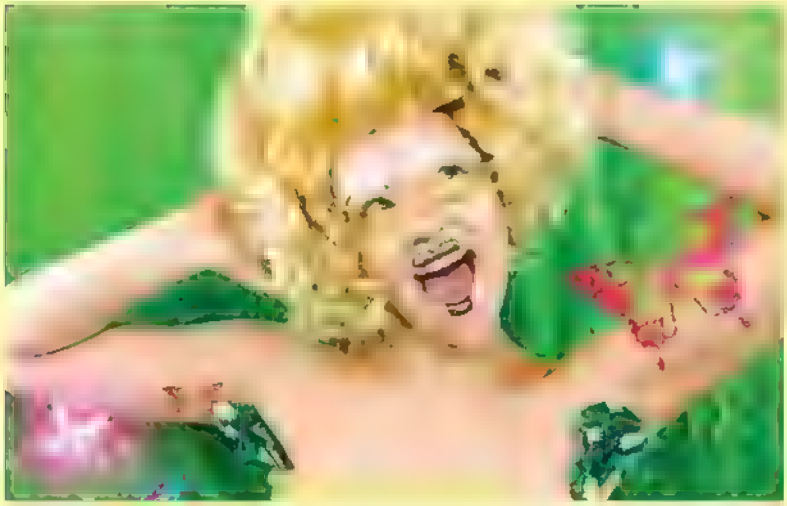


WWW.GORGEOUSCLUB.CO.UK

FACEBOOK:/GORGEOUSNIGHTCLUB TWITTER:@GORGEOUSWTON

GORGEOUS, SCHOOL STREET, WOLVERHAMPTON, WV1 1LF. 01902 771122

Party with fairies and pixies at **GLITTER SHIT** in Birmingham!



Looking for a night out that's a little bit more quirky? Then look no further than Glitter Shit on Friday 24 March!

Taking you through the vines and flowers to the hidden Realm of the Fays, Glitter Shit brings Birmingham's gay scene a whole load of 'glitter, freaks and '90s beats'

With a strict '90s and noughties dance and pop music policy, the event encourages guests to cover themselves in glitter and enjoy a night out they probably won't forget in a hurry

There'll be glitter makeup girls on hand to help you get in the mood, while Glitter Shit's very own creative club freaks will be available for dancing, photos, shots and hugs'

[redacted]

FRIDAY NIGHT CABARET each and every week at popular Birmingham bar

If you're out and about in Birmingham on a Friday night and looking for great cabaret to enjoy, look no further than the Village Inn.

Kicking off the venue's March line-up is Lola Lasagne Friday the 3rd The following week sees Vicki Vivacious dropping in, followed by Kara Van Park the week after

Friday the 24th sees the one and only Son of a Tutu and on the 31st, Sandra heads back to the venue, to see you into April!

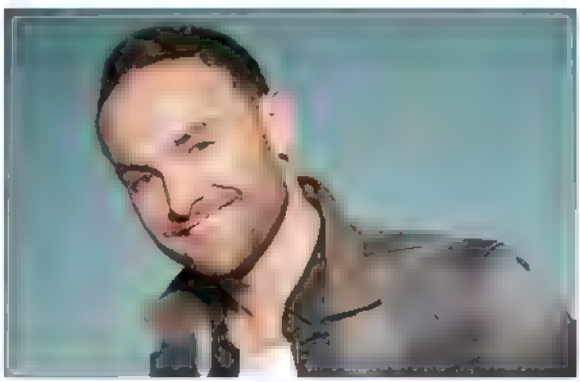
[redacted]

Kevin Simm & Mary Mac on hand to help Brum's **EDEN BAR** celebrate its ninth birthday!

One of the Birmingham gay scene's most popular venues turns nine this month - and boy, has it got a party planned!

Eden Bar, on Sherlock Street, is going all out to host one of the greatest birthday parties it's ever had So join Garry, Cal and the team on Saturday 25 March, when they'll be hosting a night of entertainment from drag star Mary Mac and former Liberty X singer Kevin Simm. Happy birthday Eden!

[redacted]



XXL BIRMINGHAM brings all the boys (and bears) to the yard...

Men-only club night XXL returns to Birmingham this month - and it promises to be as good as ever!

The award-winning club night, taking place on the third Friday of every month (17 March), features resident DJ Paul Morrell playing the biggest hits and remixes to get the dancefloor packed

Oh, and if you fancy making your night out that little bit hotter, don't forget there's a dark room upstairs!

If you've never been before, why not check it out this month?

[redacted]

MONDAY

March 6 13 20 27

BIRMINGHAM

BUY ONE GET ONE FREE PIZZAS - Every Monday
The Loft

MINISTRY OF POUND - with DJ Mike Emery from 9pm. Selected drinks £1. Open until 2am.
Missing Bar

BINGO - Bingo with Queeny
The Village Inn

SUGAR RUSH - £2 entry
Nightingale Club

MONDAY MADNESS - [illegible] 2am. Open 10p[illegible]
Bar Jester

[illegible]
Bar Jester

POUNDED - [illegible]
[illegible]

WEST MIDLANDS

FABULOUS Featuring resident DJ Col. playing the best in chart hits, camp tunes and more. Live

cabaret every 1st Monday of the month. ***Mon 6 March*** - Danny Beard. Free admission before midnight and just £3 after.
C:21, Shrewsbury

THE MONDAY CLUB - 9pm-5am - Student night. Everything is £2 (Shots £1) with DJ Lee Edward.
Gorgeous, Wolverhampton

[illegible]
Three Furnaces, Telford

GET THE PARTY STARTED - F[illegible] With DJ Fo[illegible]
Goss.p, Stoke on Trent

[illegible]
[illegible] drinks £1.50 [illegible]
P!nk, Stoke on Trent

[illegible]

2 TILL 2 - [illegible]
The Boston, Northampton

DISCO 7pm-midnight
New Foresters, Nottingham

TUESDAY

March 7 14 21 28

BIRMINGHAM

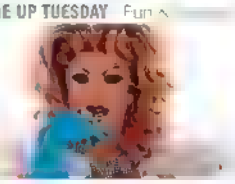
90'S NIGHT - Every Tuesday night 10.30pm-3am.
Nightingale Club

BOGOF TUESDAY - Buy any land, sea or field plate and get one free
The Loft

SCREAM STAR SUPERSTAR - With your host karaoke temptress, Gavina. Party starts at 9pm till late
Missing Bar

OPEN YOUR SNATCH - Songs Games & Prizes with Miss Penny
The Village Inn

TUNE UP TUESDAY - Fun [illegible]



Bar Jester

WEST MIDLANDS

[illegible] - n. Drinks from £1.2[illegible]

The Lion Bar & Club, Walsall

CAMP QUIZ - Wi[illegible] starts 8.30pm
Three Furnaces, Telford

DIVERSITY - [illegible]
Velvet, Worcester

FLAUNT - A[illegible] o suit every[illegible]
Brewery Tap, Worcester

SKYE'S PARTY NIGHT - D[illegible]
The White Hart, Wolverhampton

TWISTED TUESDAYS - Hos[illegible]
[illegible]
Coventry

EAST MIDLANDS

2 TILL 2 - Open from 2pm til 2[illegible]
The Boston, Northampton

CHILL OUT NIGHT - Free F[illegible] midnight
New Foresters, Nottingham

GAMES NIGHT - [illegible] Nintendo Wii fro[illegible]
Dover Castle, Leicester

[illegible]

March 1 8 15 22 29

BIRMINGHAM

ROAST DINNER - Get a Sunday Roast - on a Wednesday! It's a game changing concept
The Loft

2 GOOD 2 MISS - Drinks from just £2 with DJ Mike Emery. **Missing Bar**

KILLER KARAOKE - with Charlotte the Harlotte
The Village Inn

2 FOR 1 COCKTAILS - [illegible] cocktai[illegible]
Sidewalk

DADDY'S DEALS AND FREE POOL - [illegible] 7-11pm
The Fox

WACKY WEDNESDAYS - H[illegible]
Bar Jester

WEDNESDAY LINE - Line Dancing [illegible]
The Wellington

WEST MIDLANDS

[illegible] & DJ - [illegible]
Rainbows, Coventry

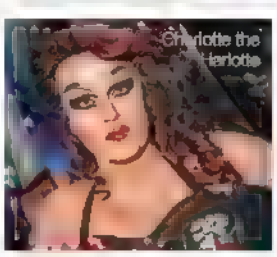
STUDENT CLUB NIGHT - [illegible] promotions. Fre[illegible] ore 10pm
Three Furnaces, Telford

WACKY WEDNESDAYS - Kara[illegible] Games. Open 10pm-mid ni[illegible]
Rainbows, Coventry

EAST MIDLANDS

KARAOKE - [illegible]
The Boston, Northampton

GAMES NIGHT - Free D[illegible] 2am. Drinks from £1 [illegible]
New Foresters, Nottingham



[illegible]

March 2 9 16 23 30

[illegible]

[illegible] - Grazing Plates for just £10. Plus there's Rum & Ting cocktails for £4.50
The Loft Lounge

LA VOIX - ***Thurs 9 March*** - Live cabaret with La Voix. Free entry!
Eden Bar

CULT - Bringing dirty house back home. Top Floor from 10pm
Nightingale Club

I <3 THE 90S - From 8pm with DJ Dan. Doors open from 2pm.
[illegible]

DANNY BEARD - ***Thurs 16 March*** - Live cabaret from the Britain's Got Talent contestant. Free entry
[illegible] Bar

POUNDED - £5 entry. Drinks from a £1. DJ Corey playing chart and dance on whilst Miss Marty and DJ Craig with all the pop and cheese on the middle floor
Nightingale Club

TANGO THURSDAYS - with Marty Happy Hour 12noon-2am.
The Village Inn

THROWBACK THURSDAY - [illegible] bombs and great music!
[illegible]

DROP THE BOMB - [illegible]
Sidewalk

SHOT EXCHANGE - [illegible] and dow[illegible]
The Core

[illegible]

12.01 - with DJ James Levett. Open from Midnight until 5am with drinks from £1
Gorgeous, Wolves

DISCO & DJ - A night of fun wi[illegible] lossless G[illegible]
The White Hart, Wolverhampton

EAST MIDLANDS

2 TILL 2 - [illegible]
The Boston, Northampton

THE BIGGEST GAY
MONDAY NIGHT IN THE MIDLANDS!

MON 6TH MARCH
DANNY BEARD
WINNER OF UK DRAG IDOL

MON 3RD APRIL
DRAG WITH NO NAME

FREE ENTRY BEFORE MIDNIGHT!
10PM-3AM

Fabulous

PLUS: HAPPY HOUR FROM 10PM // DRINKS FROM £1 ALL NIGHT

C:21

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BIRMINGHAM

BEER & PRETZEL - Grab a free soft pretzel with any craft beer. Available throughout the day
The Loft Lounge

ALL DAY EVERY DAY PRICES - D. Parm, takes over the weekend by playing the best of club classics house, R&B and all your favourites. Enjoy all day every day prices too!
Sidewalk

BIG GAY FRIDAY - Party anthems all night long with Missing's D. James. Open until the early hours
[illegible] Bar

FANNY BURNS - *Fri 3 March* - A night of cabaret with Fanny Burns
Eden Bar

SING STAR SUPERSTAR WITH DISCO & KARAOKE - with DJ Nikki.
Eden Bar

FREAKY FRIDAY - Big name cabaret at midnight. Open until 6am. *Fri 3 Mar* - Lola Lasagne *Fri 10 Mar* Vick Vivacious *Fri 17 Mar* - Kara Van Park *Fri 24 Mar* - Son Of A Tutu. *Fri 31 Mar* - Sandra
The Village Inn

INFUSION - Free Entry. Absolute Anthems and Floor Fillers with D. Corey. Drinks from £2. £2 entry
Nightingale Club

KICK START - Kick start the weekend from 9pm til the early hours. Hosted by James.
[illegible] Bar

L8R - With Charlotte the Harlotte. Open until 6am every Friday
The Village Inn

MIDSBEARS - *Fri 17 March* - A night for the bear community, admirers and friends
Eden Bar

OLD SKOOL GARAGE - The first Friday of the month sees the Nightingale go back in time, playing some of the best in old skool garage. A night not to be missed.
Nightingale Club

RUBY MURRAY - *Fri 24 March* - A night of cabaret with Ruby Murray
Eden Bar

SAATHI - *Fri 31 March* - Every last Friday monthly. South Asian Gay and Lesbian club night. Bollywood and Bhangra
Nightingale Club

SING STAR SUPERSTAR - with DJ Nikki every Friday - your chance to win cash!
Eden Bar

VINTAGE FRIDAYS - a night of soul, funk, rock, motown, Northern Soul and all the classic favourites

The Loft Lounge

XXL - *Fri 17 March* - Men only night with DJ Paul Morrell. Early Bear offers until 11pm. Every 3rd Friday of each month.
The Core Club

FUNK'D UP [illegible]

Club Chic

KARAOKE - Come and have a sing

The Fox

RETRO FRIDAY [illegible]

Bar Jester

WEST MIDLANDS

THANK FUNK IT'S FRIDAY -
Gorgeous residents spinning house and classics. 12am - 6am
Gorgeous Club, Wolverhampton

[illegible]

The Lion, Walsall

TV PARTY NIGHT [illegible]

The Greenhouse, Darlaston

CLUB NIGHT [illegible]

The Three Furnaces, Telford

[illegible] weekend off with a party. O[illegible]

Rainbows, Coventry

[illegible]

The Bell, Stourbridge

[illegible]

The White Hart, Wolverhampton

[illegible]

Pink, Stoke on Trent

TFI FRIDAY [illegible]

Brewery Tap, Worcester

EAST MIDLANDS

PINK POUNDER - [illegible]

The Boston, Northampton

[illegible]

Helsinki, Leicester

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BOLDER BEARS CLUB
XXL BIRMINGHAM
17th MARCH
10PM - 4AM £5 ENTRY
THE CORE CLUB
135 SHERLOCK ST, BIRMINGHAM B5 6NB
XXL-LONDON.COM

SATURDAY

March

4 11 18 25

BIRMINGHAM

80S HITS - with DJ Dan from 2am it's back to the 80s.
Eden Bar

THE ATTIC - Available for hire. Call the venue for more info - 0121 622 4256
[illegible] Bar

LADY GAGA NIGHT - *Sat 25 March* - A club night dedicated to Lady Gaga and a chance to win a pair of tickets to her sold out Birmingham show in October!
The Nightingale

BIG SATURDAY NIGHT OUT - Over 2 floors. 3 DJs. Open til 8am. With DJ Lotty & DJ Richard Moon. With DJ Tonie in The Village Underground
The Village Inn

BIG SATURGAY NIGHT OUT - Every Saturday, with loads of drinks promotions
Nightingale Club

MORRISSEY DISCO - *Sat 18 March* - A night of great music in the Eden Marquee!
Eden Bar

CULT - Bringing dirty house back home. Top Floor from 10pm
Nightingale Club

KARAOKE & COCKTAILS - in The Attic, plus music from across the decades.
[illegible]

LBR - With Charlotte the Harlotte Open until 8am every Saturday
The Village Inn

TOTALLY TINA - *Sat 4 March* - A Tina Turner tribute and Celebrity Big Brother star Austin Armacost
Eden Bar

EDEN'S 9TH BIRTHDAY - *Sat 25 March* - Celebrating Eden's 9th birthday with Kevin Simm and Mary Mac!
Eden Bar

SATURDAY SESSIONS - With DJ Simon Baker from 8pm.
The Loft Lounge

SATURS-FACTION - Welcome in the weekend with resident DJ, playing the best of everything.
Sidewalk

SWAGGERLICIOUS - Every Saturday night (Room 4)
Nightingale Club

YOUR DISCO NEEDS YOU - featuring the biggest remixes, absolute anthems, dance classics, disco, house and commercial with your host Twiggy
Missing

THE BREAKFAST CLUB Eve[illegible]
Club Chic

FABULOUS SATURDAYS [illegible]
The Core Club

DJ PARTY NIGHT - Oper[illegible]
The Fox

#JUST SAYING Get in mood with resid[illegible] Great drinks offers Hour until 2[illegible] very late
Bar Jester

[illegible]
The Wellington

WEST MIDLANDS

STRAWBERRY SATURDAYS - Wolverhampton's biggest night out with DJ Jame Levett'
Gorgeous, Wolverhampton

[illegible]
The Lion, Walsall

CLUB NIGHT - [illegible]

[illegible]
The Three Furnaces, Telford

BIG SATURDAY NIGHT OUT [illegible]
Rainbows, Coventry

INCLUSION with big name Birmingham & UK DJs e[illegible]
The Bell, Stourbridge

NOT TO MISS F[illegible]
Pink, Stoke on Trent

WEEKLY CABARET - with DJ[illegible]
The White Hart, Wolverhampton

EAST MIDLANDS

BIG WEEKEND PARTY NIGHT - 10pm [illegible] The
Boston, Northampton

CLUB NIGHT - With DJ Nik B plan[illegible]
Helsinki, Leicester

SUNDAY

5 12 19 26 March

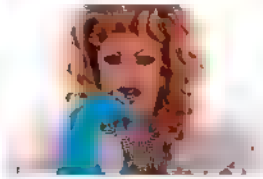
BIRMINGHAM

SUNDAY ROAST - Grab a great roast dinner to cure that hangover!
The Loft Lounge

[illegible] KING STAR SUPERSTAR WITH DISCO & KARAOKE - with DJ Nikki. Every Sunday
Eden Bar

LOCAL CABARET with Charlotte the Harlotte. Showcasing the best of the Midlands cabaret circuit every Sunday
The Village Inn

MISS PENNY'S SUPERSIZE SUNDAYS Cabaret every Sunday hosted by the one and only Miss Penny on stage at 8.30pm and 10.30pm.
Missing Bar



NEW FOOD MENU [illegible]
Sidewalk

[illegible]
The Fox

SUNDAY IS FUNDAY [illegible]
[illegible]

WEST MIDLANDS

MARTY'S PARTY 9pm-4am - Fun & Games. Karaoke, Prizes and all round mayhem. Drinks from £2
Gorgeous, Wolverhampton

THE PARTY LOUNGE F[illegible] full Drag host and party [illegible] & are
Lion Bar & Club, Walsall

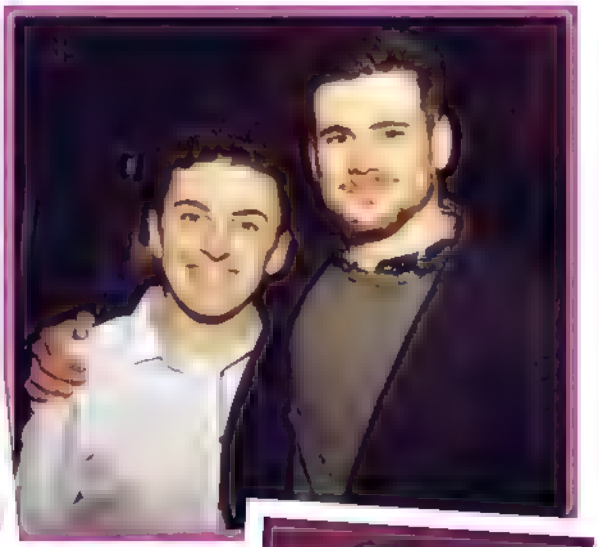
KARAOKE & DJ A night of [illegible]
The White Hart, Wolverhampton

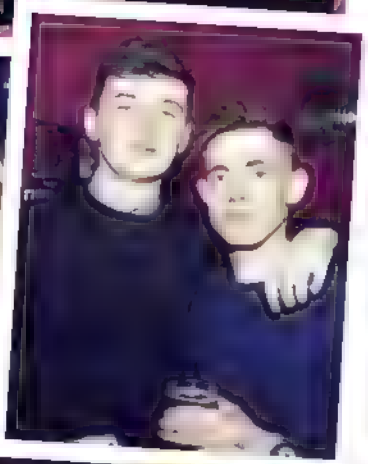
RANDOM PARTY NIGHT [illegible]
Three Furnaces, Telford

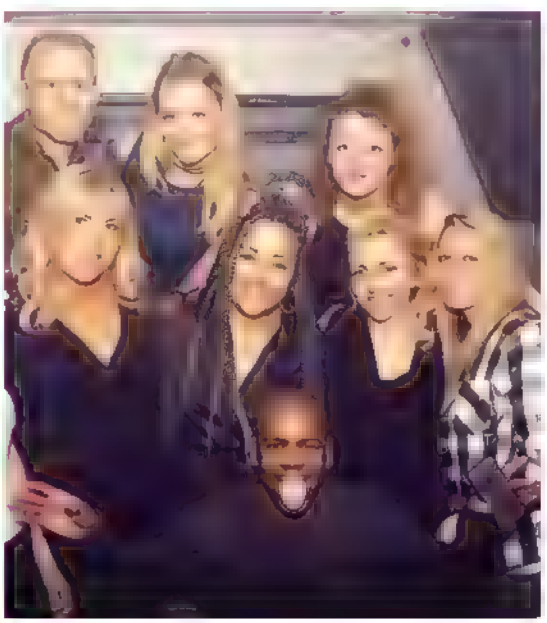
EAST MIDLANDS

BRUNCH CLUB Brunch for £5 wi[illegible] and ec soft drinks, mu[illegible]
Rainbow & Dove, Leicester

Gorgeous: A great night out in Wolverhampton!

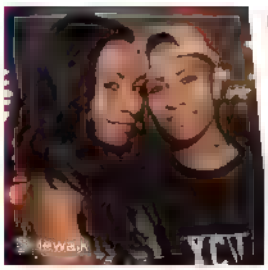


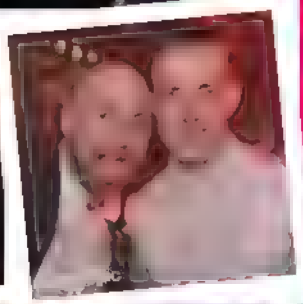


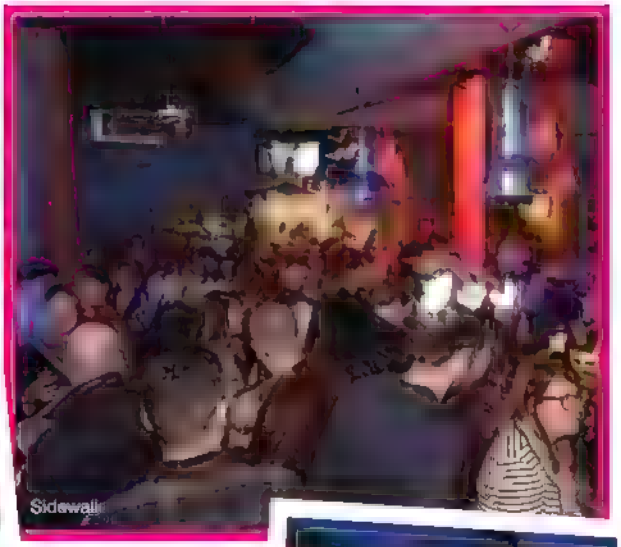


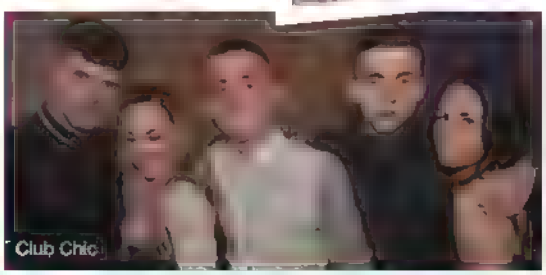
Pictures by **JakeeeM Photography**

Out and about in **Birmingham's Gay Village**!









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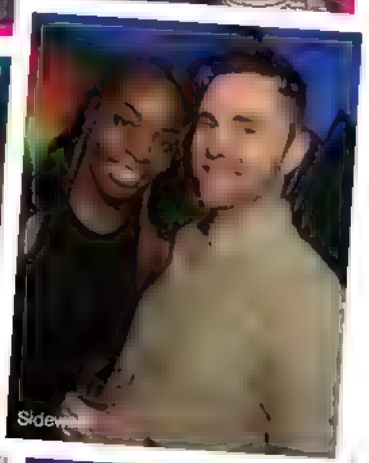
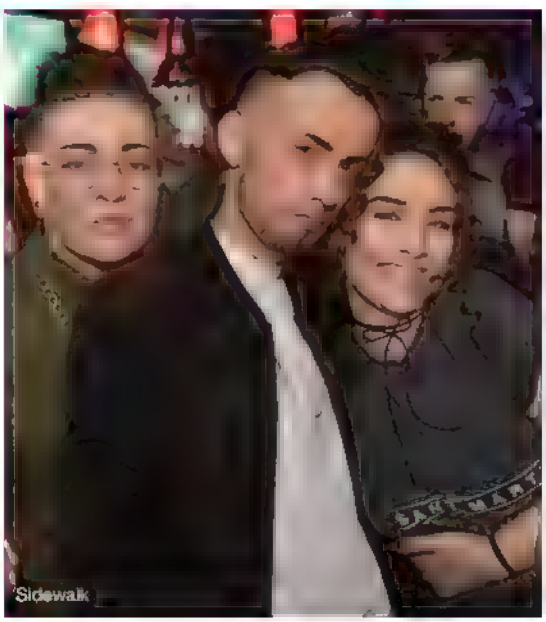
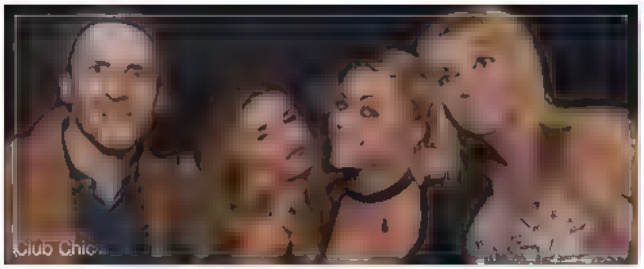





Club Chic

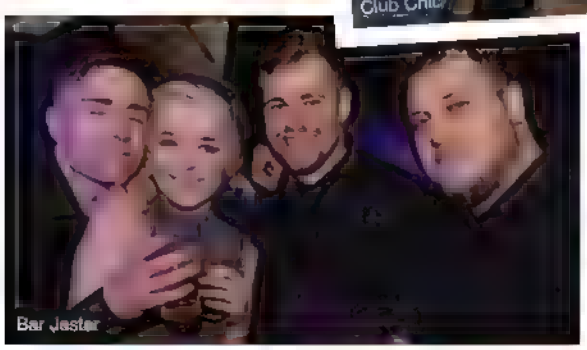
Bar Jester

Bar Jester

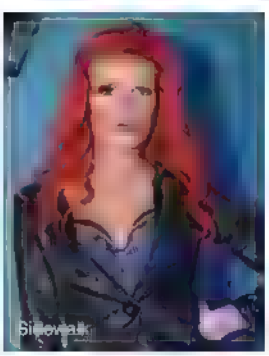
Sidewalk

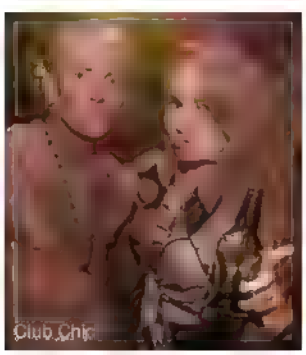
Club Chic

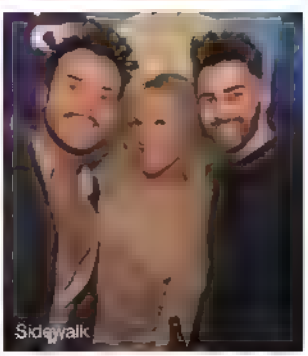
Sidewalk


Bar Jester

Club Chic


Sidewalk


Club Chic


Sidewalk

EVERY SUNDAY
8PM-3AM

PRESENTING

MARTY & TILLY'S PARTY!

FUN & FROLICS... GAMES & GIVEAWAYS...

FREE ENTRY...
SOURZ & SAMBUCA SHOTS £1.50 ALL NIGHT

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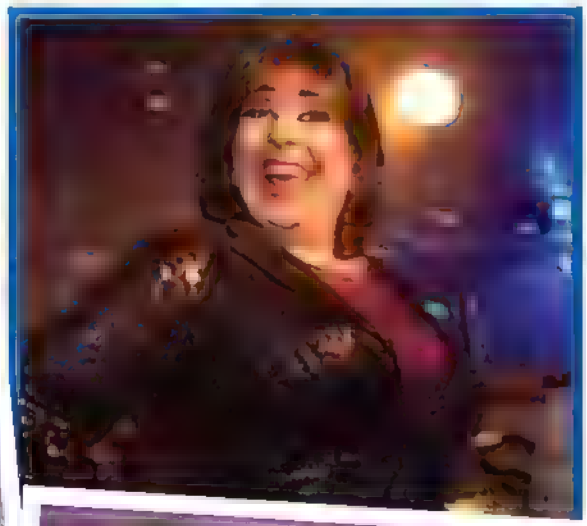
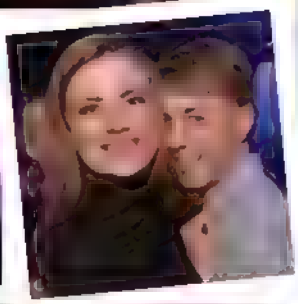
Glamorous: A camptastic night out with Pam Catz!





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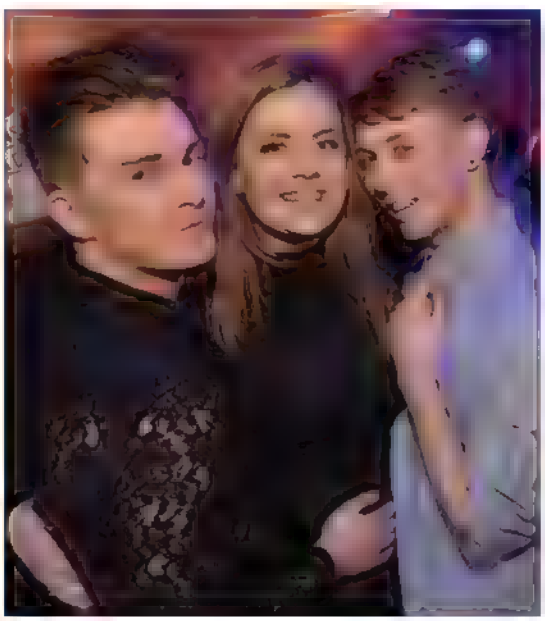
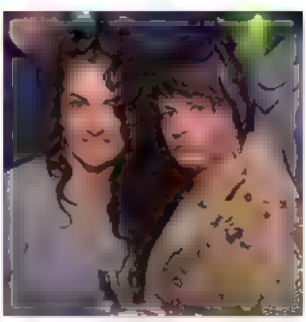
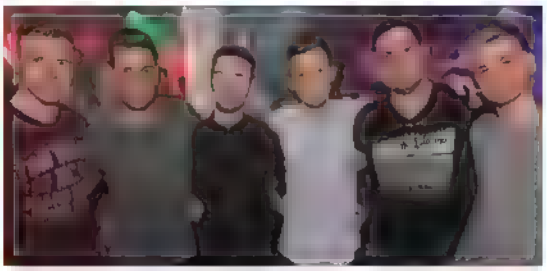
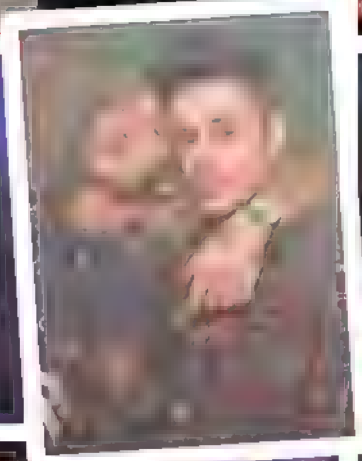


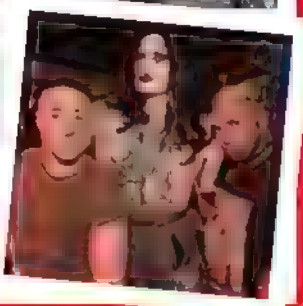


Pictures by **Laura Byrne**

Dance till the early hours at Brum's **Nightingale Club**







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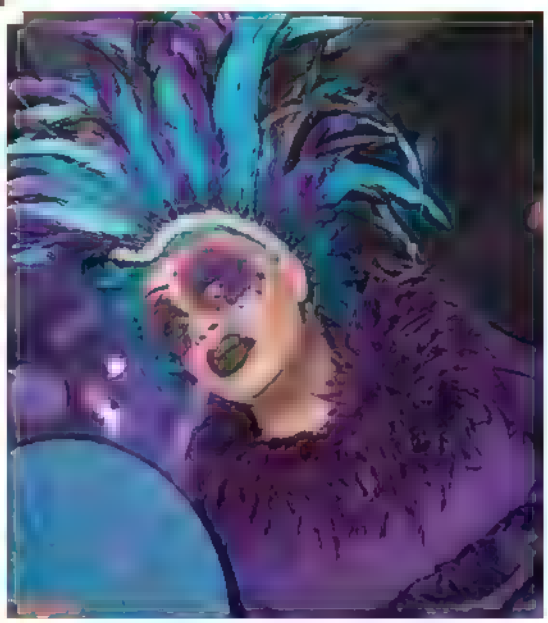
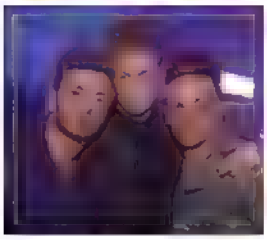
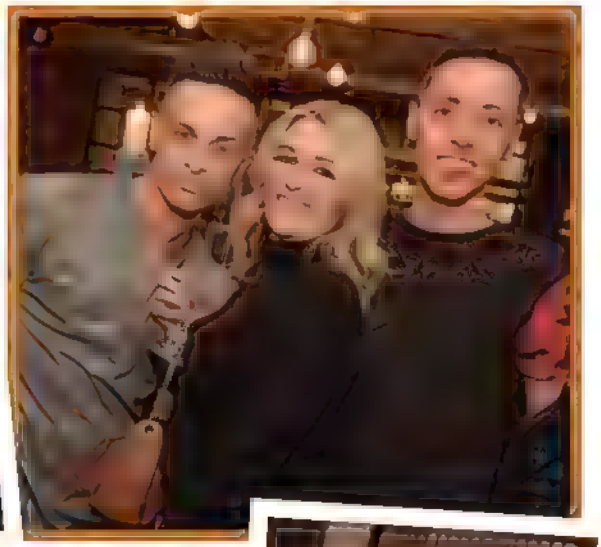
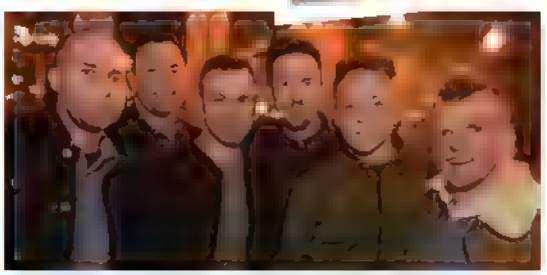


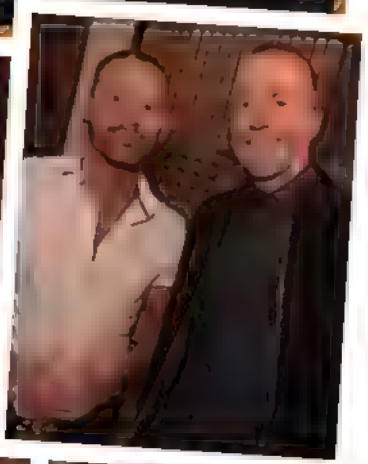


Pictures by **Laura Byrne**

Get your Saturday night on the go at **The Loft**







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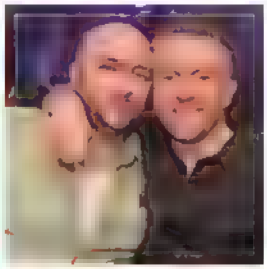
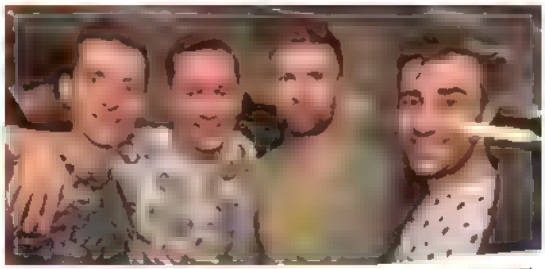
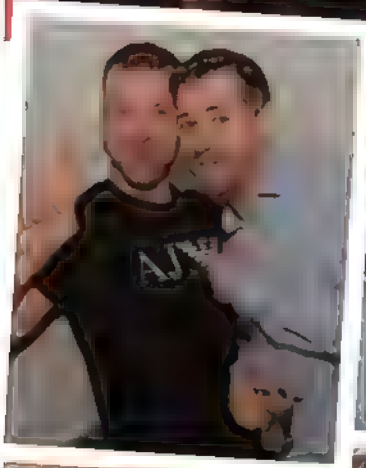
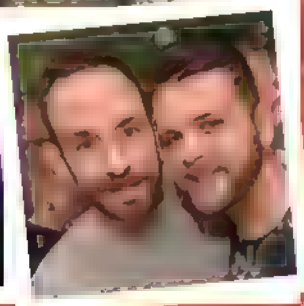
Pictures by **Laura Byrne**

Brum's **Village Inn** is the destination for party people!





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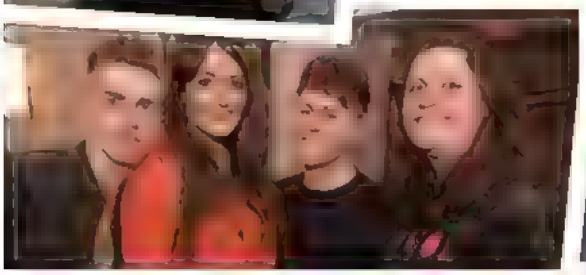

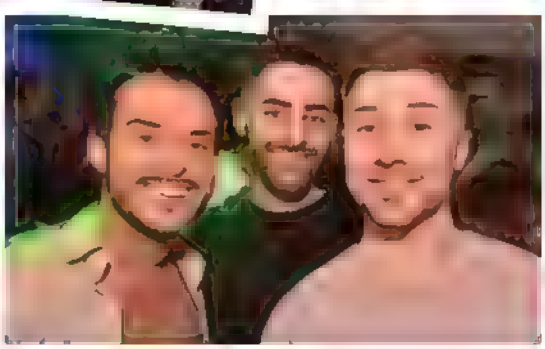

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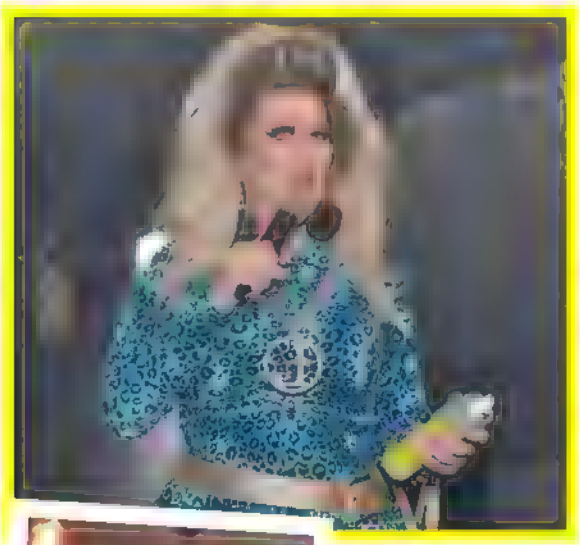
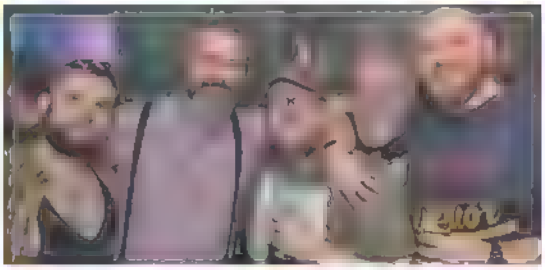
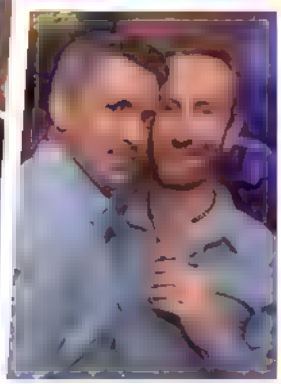
Cabaret, drinks and dancing at Birmingham's **Eden**







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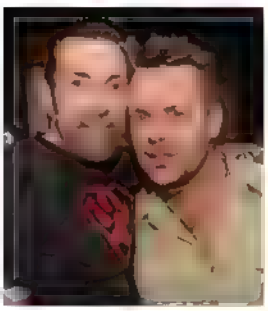

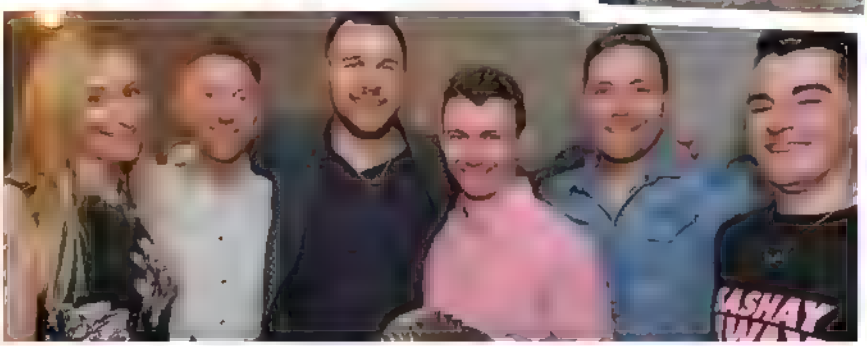

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March Entertainment

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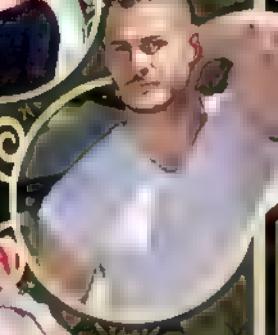
Fri 3rd — Fanny Burns

Sat 4th — Totally Tina Tina Turner Tribute & Celebrity BIG BROTHER Star Austin Armacost



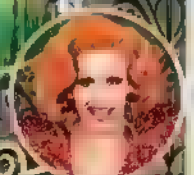
Thurs 9th — La Voix

Thurs 16th — Danny Beard

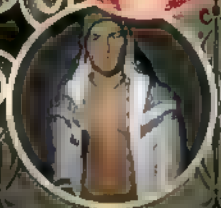
Fri 17th — Mids Bears

Sat 18th — Morrissey Disco

Fri 24th — Ruby Murry



Sat 25th — Eden's 9th Birthday Bash Kevin Simm & Mary Mac



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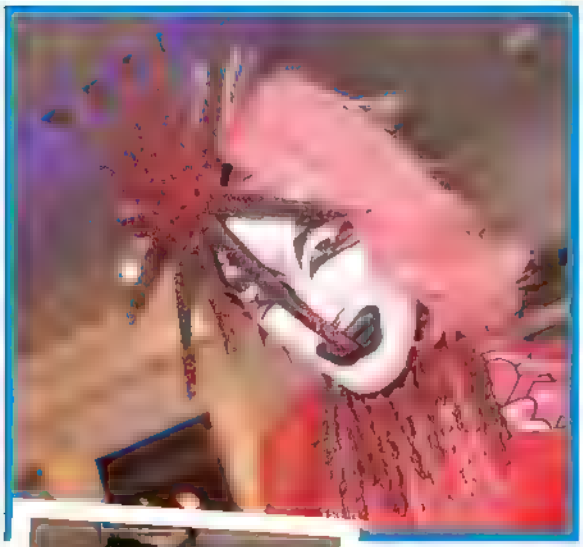

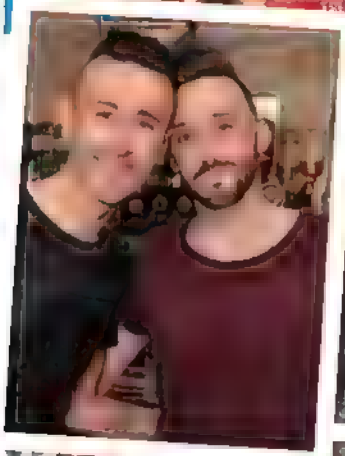

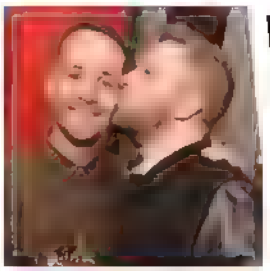

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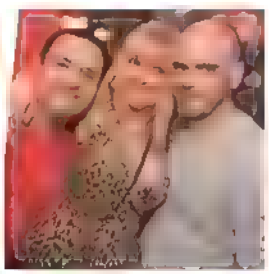
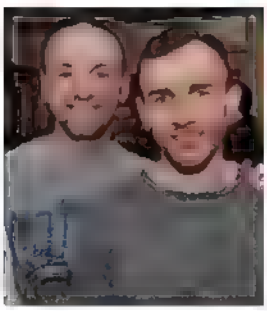
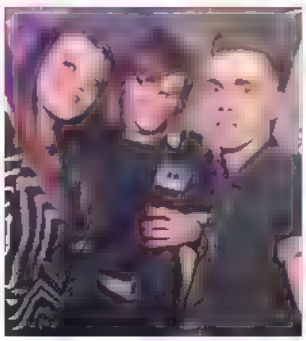
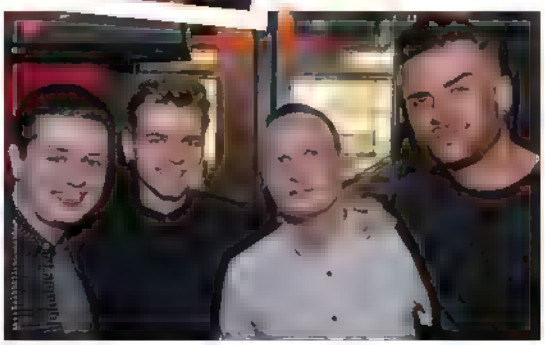

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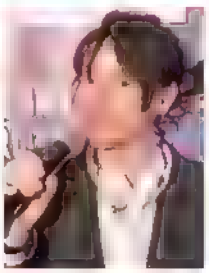
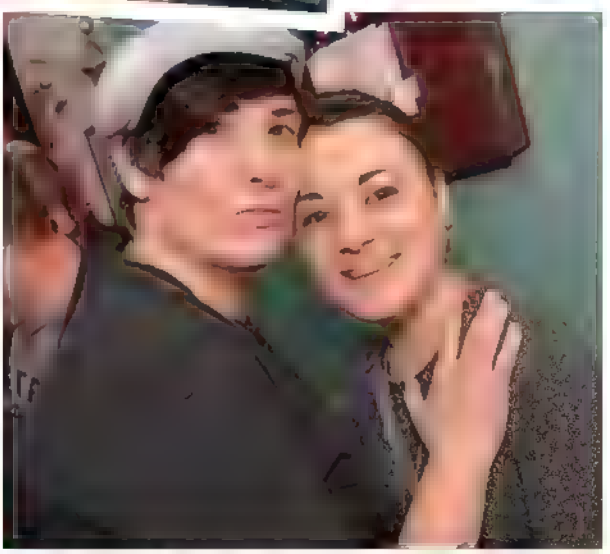
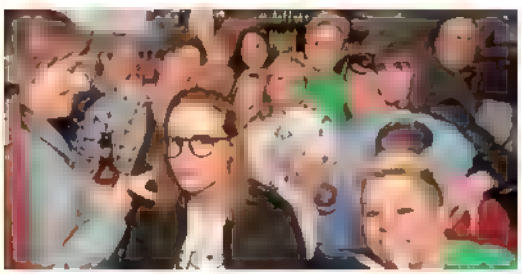
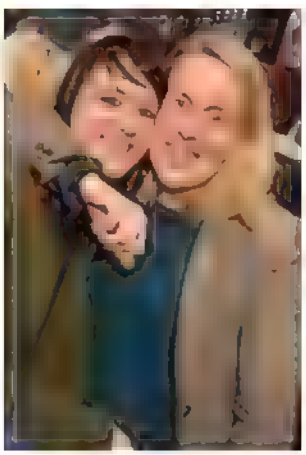

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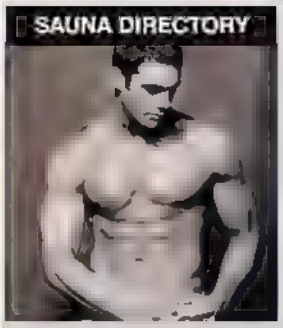

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THE LIFE OF A THIRTYSOMETHING GAY
by Stephen Spinks

Beard currency

Sat in a rammed York's Bakery on Stephenson Street in Birmingham, I spy a handsome otter. He spies me. Things are looking good. Good at least until I take a sip of one of York's amazing coffees. He starts laughing as I realise to my eternal shame that I'm wearing a white, frothy coffee in my increasingly thick man-beard. Beards are great, but Jesus they're hard work! Needless to say, though, it got us talking.

I love beards. I mean, anyone with a beard generally gets to go to the front of the queue. Beards have currency, and I know I'm not alone in this seemingly innocuous fetish. The rise of facial scruff is not by chance. The '90s clean-cut look, inspired by the twink and TV shows like Will & Grace and Queer Eye For The Straight Guy, created without doubt the rise of the urban metrosexual, which began, like all fashion trends, within gay culture. The phrase itself was coined by that marine-loving bear Mark Simpson, long before it reached the likes of David Beckham. The highly polished, beautifully toned and perfectly manicured hands, hair and much else was a by-product of an age when slick meant smooth and smooth meant polished. Polished got you laid. Needless to say, as a hairy twentysomething, I found it tough - as did my clippers ploughing through my man-scaping regime!

Fast forward 15 years and the metrosexual is dead. Now we have the 'lumbersexual', 'the hipster' and those beard-loving admirers that seek out swaggering fuck-buddies with endless facial hair because, well, bearded men are fuckin' hot!

I know it's not just me who melts at the touch of a good bit of scruff. A tug here or there is great fun, and when 'put to use' in many a particular place, it has the power to be electrifying. The soft, thick facial weave that comes in all different shapes, sizes and colours has the ability to make the ordinary into the extraordinary. The full beard, the Garibaldi, or the Bandholz all have a place. Even the wild and carefree Gandalf finds a haven amongst some people. I love the Verdi. Whatever the shape, it's a modern sign of masculinity worn freely and more confidently than ever before. The guy next door can be free to be a guy's guy, and it's clear we love it. The beard has currency and has gone mainstream. You don't have to look long on Scruff or out in the Gay Village to see it there, all bushy and proud. We've become increasingly obsessed. I, for one, am in the club.

I've taken to growing my own over the last three months. Much like any lumbersexual, you won't find me wielding an axe or playing with my wood (well, not a tree anyway), but you will find us trimming, shaving, oiling and man-scaping to craft the perfect look, which takes time and dedication. Perhaps the metrosexual spirit still haunts us after all? Last week, as I was getting up to no good with a guy at the Greenhouse who himself had a stunning face filled with bushy red hair, he told me midway that my beard smelt amazing! It made us both laugh. You see, beards have currency. Beards get you laid.

There's nothing more primeval than kissing a beard. Try sleeping next to one. The feeling of the soft hair delicately rubbing on your back, in the crook of your neck or against your chest as you lie there next to your beau or latest pick-up, is positively climatic in itself. Against an earlobe it's simply animalistic. You know what I mean. If you don't, try it!

To be certain that it's not just me, I caught up recently with very handsome guys Jay and Jon, who were working the bar at The Loft, and asked them for their view.

Opinion was definitely pro beards, especially when they're cared for and, more so, put to good use. Beards, we agreed, were cutting across the old stereotypes. Gone were the days when facial hair was the preserve of the sexy bears, as now hair can be found everywhere from the twink to the cub to the otter and much besides.

Beards have formed a unified identity. They have an equality all of their own. I would feel naked without it - as would Jay and others, apparently. It soon becomes your bit of security, much like donning your latest Prada sunglasses or Ray-Bans after a heavy night out.

Beards are also art. The Gay Beards, based in America, are two guys who've known each other since childhood and who one day decided to dress their manly manes with flowers. As avid 'igers', their antics have gone viral. The concept developed further, and their beards are now theatrically dressed with sweets, popcorn and a host of other items which are captured in photographs and sell for a small fortune. It may be weird to some, but it has a strange appeal on canvas.

Accessorising your beard has become vogue. Whilst I'm not suggesting beard accessorising is for everyone, it's clear that beards once again hold a currency of their own.

ON THE BALL
with Steve Ball

Fantabulosa fairy

Church of England bishops have been getting a bit hot under their dog collars recently. In January, the House of Bishops published an official report for the Church on sexuality, after three years of 'shared conversations' with the LGBT community and other Christians. It called for a 'culture of welcome and support' for gay Christians but also maintained the position that marriage in church should remain between a man and a woman, and services should not be held to bless same-sex relationships.

The House of Bishops overwhelmingly voted for it and the House of Laity backed it by 106 votes to 83. But to get approval, the report had to win backing in all three houses of the general synod. The House of Clergy rejected it by 100 votes to 93.

Many in the LGBT and wider community rejoiced at the decision, but it has left the bishops in a fine old pickle. They weren't best pleased when, in early February, a group of trainee priests did their bit to commemorate LGBT History Month and, in their words, "queer the liturgy of evening prayer" by holding what was described as a liturgical experiment - a service in the gay-slang language Polari at the chapel of Westcott House in Cambridge.

Polari is thought to have first been used in Victorian London but was brought to wider public attention in the 1960s by comedian Kenneth Williams in the BBC radio series Round The Horne.

The trainee priests' event didn't go down well with officials, who said it hadn't been authorised and was at odds with the doctrine and teaching of the church. The service was based on the Polari bible, a work compiled as a project in 2003 by the irreverent Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, and included an Old Testament reading from the Prophet Joel. "Rend your heart and not your garments, return to the Lord your God" was printed in Polari as "rend your thumping chest and not your frocks - and turn unto the Duchess your Gloria: for she is bona and merciful".

Instead of the traditional "Glory be to the father, and to the son, and the Holy Spirit", the prayer offered was: "Fabeness be to the Auntie, and to the Homie Chavvie, and to the Fantabulosa Fairy".

This may all sound a bit ridiculous, but not half as much as bishops who are happy to bless a nuclear submarine, a pub or a pet but not a same-sex married couple.
Not at all Fantabulosa.

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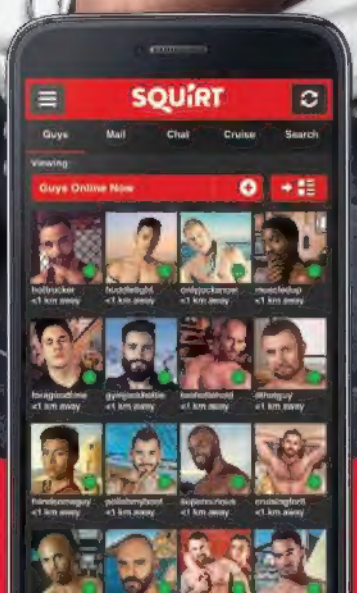

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